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Bass Guitar Magazine

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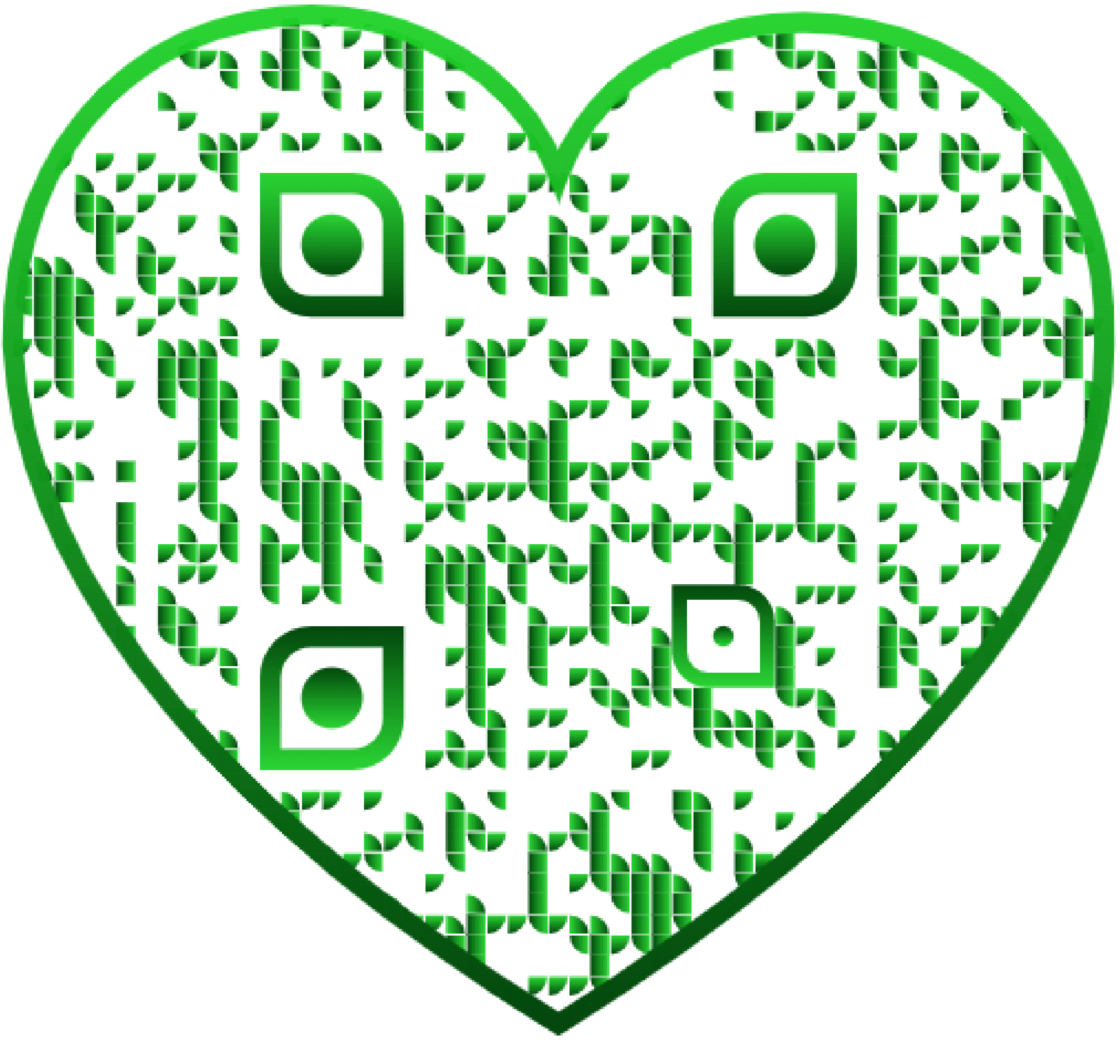

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It's our favourite time of the year, when the London Bass Guitar Show is almost upon us. There's no other show quite as essential for the UK bass player as the LBGS, held as always at London's Olympia venue, and this time we can safely say with (almost) no fear of being called arrogant that we've outdone ourselves with the line-up of artists. For starters, how about the godfather of electric rock bass, Jack Bruce? Then there's the jazz legend Jeff Berlin, Duran Duran's John Taylor, heavy metal hero Frank Bello of Anthrax, heavy rock's iconic Roger Glover of the perennial Deep Purple and prog-rock duo Twinscapes, featuring Lorenzo Feliciati and Porcupine Tree bassist Colin Edwin. Add to that soul/funk supremo Armand Sabal-Lecco and the session bassist to end all session bassists, Lee Sklar, and you've got a collection of bass talent that has literally never been seen before. Paul Turner, Mo Foster and Steve Lawson will be there too: does it get any better? And don't miss out on the planetload of gear manufacturers showing us their latest basses, amps, effects and accessories either.

In this magazine we've stretched the pages to fit in more bass goodness than ever before, too. Bob Daisley, Carmine Rojas and Ozzy's bassist Blasko are legends in their own right, and we've added Pete Wentz of Fall Out Boy and Dougie Poynter of McFly to this mix to make this a magazine for everyone. And did we mention Dweezil Zappa? Our gear reviews section stretches from the classic – Gibson – to the brand new – Alpher – and as always our tuition section covers all the bases. Literally.

That's enough hot air from me. Come to the LBGS for evidence that when it comes to bass, we always put our money where our mouths are. Info and tickets can be had from www.londonbassguitarshow.com. See you at Olympia: it's going to be epic!

Joel McIver, editor

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THE LOW DOWN

News and views from Planet Bass, brought to you by *BGM's* intrepid team of roving reporters

DEVIL IN THE DETAILS

The Caparison C2 Series DEB-E bass is on its way, featuring a solid mahogany body, a slim maple neck, a bound 'Devil's Tail' headstock and a 24-fret bound rosewood fingerboard. Loaded with a pair of EMG humbuckers, the DEB-E offers outstanding versatility and optimum 'thunderous rock monster' performance, Caparison tells us. Look out for a review shortly.

FAR FLUNG

If you're at the London Bass Guitar Show at Olympia on 1 and 2 March – and why wouldn't you be? – say hello to Maruszczyk Instruments, who will be joining us all the way from Germany and who add even more value for bass players to the already stellar line-up of exhibitors. We're particularly hoping to get our hands on the Frog bass (pictured). Hop over to stand C7 if we don't get there first.

FRIPPANT

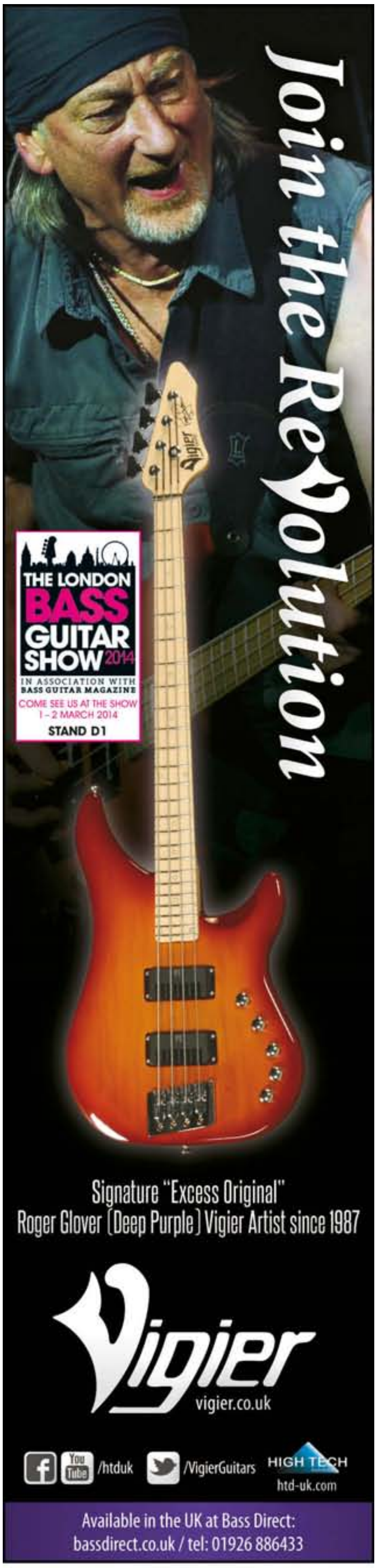
The Robert Fripp-approved King Crimson's offshoot The Crimson ProjeKCt (their spelling, not ours) will perform an exclusive one-off UK show at London's Shepherds Bush Empire on 12 March. The setlist for the evening will include material from the early 80s through the mid 1990s, with some classics from the early 70s. Bassist Tony Levin, also famous for his extensive work with Peter Gabriel, will be there: make sure you don't miss out. Levin joined King Crimson in 1981, giving birth to the fourth incarnation of the band, alongside Fripp and Bill Bruford. "Tony and myself discussed the not-easily-doable name of Stick Men & The Adrian Belew Power Trio That Do A Set Of King Crimson Music," quipped Fripp, who is staying at home this time. "Tony's suggestion was ProjeKct Krimson. Mine was The Crimson ProjeKCt."

SOMETHING ABOUT 'RAY

Aguilar, the American amp and pickup specialists, recently announced their new AG 4M and AG 5M humbucking pickups. These recreate the classic Stingray tone, says Aguilar, while adding string-to-string balance, consistency of tone and rich harmonic content. The pickups are wired in parallel and, like all Aguilar pickups, wound in Aguilar's New York City factory. They feature 42-gauge Formvar wire and Alnico V magnets and will be available in March.

FIELD DAY

The Sims and Enfield camp is gearing up for the London Bass Guitar Show 2014 with plenty of basses ready for tryouts over the two days of fun. Company founder Martin Sims says, "If the LBGS this year is as packed as it was in 2013, then everyone is going to be in for a treat. We've got our usual array of bass loveliness with the added bonus of two new models, the Lionheart and Fusion, both sporting our all new Super-Quad pickups. You've read all about them in the magazine and now's your chance to get your hands dirty and check them all out in the flesh. You can also sample the Super-Quad pickup systems that is now available for retro-fitting into your very own instrument. Grab a felt-tip pen and make a beeline for stand 15, as you are welcome to sign our new graffitied backdrop reproduction of the John Lennon wall in Prague."



Triumvirate

We select three essential albums from a genre or player.
THIS MONTH: Doug Wimbish

1 STAIN By Living Colour

When Wimbish joined Living Colour, the outfit were changing direction, from funk-rock to a more metallic sound. Listen to the clanking groove on album opener 'Go Away', which could have come straight out of an Alice In Chains session. The heavier tone didn't sit well with many fans, but the Wimbish's bass-lines cannot be denied. Check out the Les Claypool-esque slapping and grungy tone on 'Ignorance Is Bliss'. The slippery line on the more mellow 'Nothingness' is a welcome break from the muscular metal of the rest of the album.

2 EROTICA by Madonna

From heavy metal to slick pop, Wimbish is a master of the bass, and no matter what the genre is, he'll always deliver the goods. With all the hoo-ha around Madonna's mildly sexed-up live performances at the time, many people lost sight of the fact that this album features some of her best work. Doug does what's needed by pinning down the groove, sometimes laying out completely and other times propelling tracks along. As with all of Doug's work, it's the way the his bass parts serve the song that makes his approach so special.

3 DIVA by Annie Lennox

The Scottish singer's solo debut is an immaculate collection of soulful pop. For a master-class in restraint, listen to Doug's playing on 'Why'. From the muted tone to his simple note choice and clipped delivery, few players would have the discipline to play so simply. And so it continues, on tracks such as 'Cold' and the stuttering synth-style line on 'Little Bird', while on 'Precious' Doug provides something a little more groovy, with slides and chromatic passing tones.

Revolver

Every month we tell you the bass-line we can't stop listening to

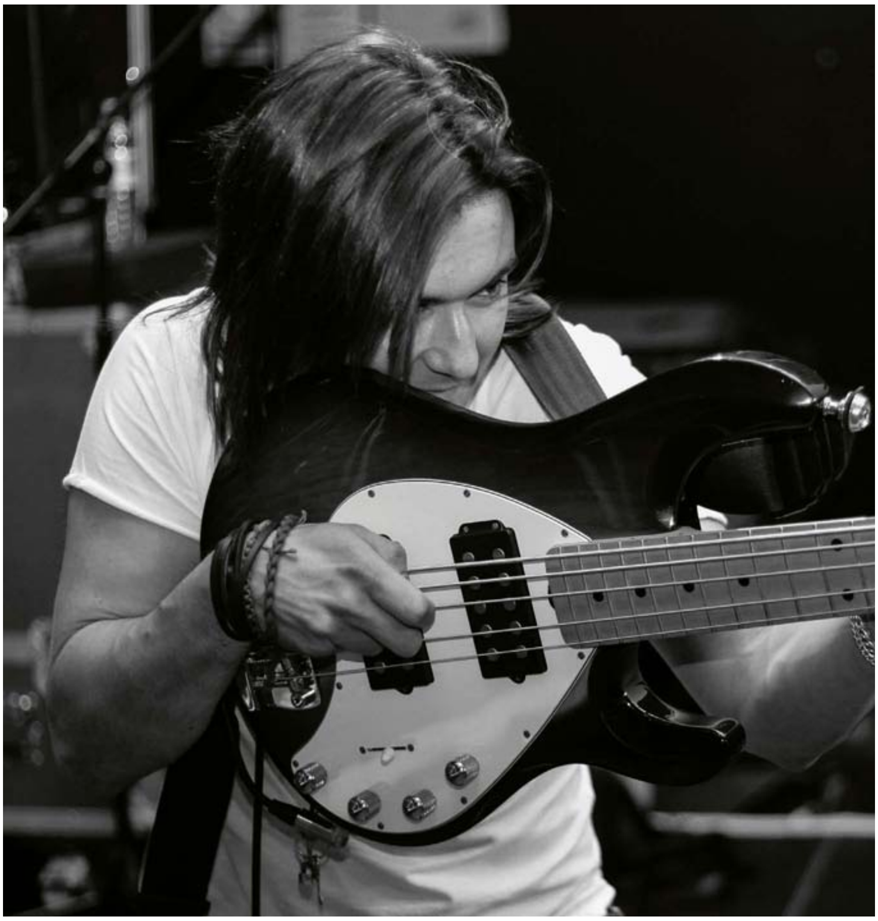
THIS MONTH:
'That's The Way Love Is'

Bassist: *James Jamerson*
Album: *That's The Way Love Is by Marvin Gaye*

By the time this album hit the streets in 1970, Marvin Gaye had already solidified his reputation as one of the world's finest vocalists. The title track features one of Gaye's most impassioned performances and as usual James Jamerson serves up a ridiculously funky bass-line. Just listen to the deceptively simple bouncing groove, those why-didn't-I-think-of-that chromatic passing tones, and the amazing way the line snakes around the vocals, holding back at just the right moment before a tasteful flourish.

NIGHT TIME

***BGM* faves Night By Night are heading out with final-countdowners Europe for the** 30th Anniversary 'Rock The North' tour in Sweden in March, starting at the Waterfront in Stockholm on 3 March, then up to northern Sweden for shows in Umea, Lulea and finally Sundsvall. "NxN have played in both Stockholm and Umea, so we're really excited to be going back again!" says bassist Jonny Thornton. "For the tour with Europe in March I'm taking my EB Music Man Stingray five-string and running an Ampeg SVT 4 Pro through an 8x10 cab. That combination was hugely successful on the Y&T tour and I had some very complimentary reviews. The Stringray through the SVT 4 is perfect for the NxN songs, it's powerful and just the right amount of attack and high end without sacrificing the overall thunderous Music Man sound. I'm looking forward to hearing it in a 3000-plus seater venue."



Fancy taking home Source Audio's lovely Soundblox Micromodeler, worth a nifty £175? But of course you do! Answer this laughably simple question and nab it.

Source Audio also manufactures another bass FX pedal. But what the dickens is it?

A An envelope filter
B A stamp filter
C A sellotape filter

Head to www.bassguitarmagazine.com/competition to enter. Closing date is 25 March.

Congrats to John Starr, who scoops a copy of Phil Mann's awesome *Chord Tones Concepts* book. WON!

JAM HOT

Keep an eye out for Jamiroquai bassist Paul Turner at the London Bass Guitar Show. Sunderland-born Paul is a mainstay of the British jazz-funk scene, having begun his career with soul legends Ruby Turner and Edwin Starr before moving to man the low end along a stellar cast of musicians including Annie Lennox, Tina Turner, Bryan Ferry, Tom Jones and George Michael. Want funk? Paul brings it, along with his band Shuffler.

Every month master restorer Simon McVeigh revives a knackered old Ovation. This month: the end of the line!

Simon McVeigh has been a session bassist for over 20 years, and works as a bass tutor at the Royal County School of Music in County Meath, Ireland. He has recorded with many artists and runs www.breadheadmusic.com, a contacts resource for professionals in the music industry.

Well, another bass restoration project has come to an end, and I'm feeling rather chuffed about this one. Not only have I discovered a new classic and given myself a new option in my arsenal, but I didn't spend the kids' inheritance in the process. This has proven to me that there are still hidden gems out there to be rediscovered, and they needn't cost the earth, so get searching!

It is unusual for me not to go over budget on a bass project, I admit, but in fairness, when you have a high-quality instrument such as this to start with, it's not that difficult to bring it up to scratch. I really took a chance on this one, however, as I didn't know very much about the track record of Ovation basses before I bought it. Ovation never got the credit they deserved for their electric basses, and there are few high-profile players out there currently playing and endorsing them. I do know that Jah Wobble plays one, though, and is rarely seen without it – and I was informed by a *BGM* reader recently that the bassist in the current Hawkind line-up is also playing one, so there are clearly converts out there flying the Ovation flag. If you ever get a chance to play one of these basses, then I urge you to give it a fair hearing: don't dismiss it because of the headstock or the logo.

To recap on what I did on this one, the overall condition of the bass was pretty rough when I got it: the main eyesore was its broken scratch guard, which I had remade as my attempt at repairing the original one ended in disaster. A tuner head had been bent at some point, and was making the instrument awkward to tune, so I got that repaired and reconditioned and now it's as good as new.

Thirty odd years of grime and scratches were polished away to reveal a stunning finish, which really lifted the bass to another level. The innards were fairly OK, with no major faults to report. The toggle switch head needed replacing, and I serviced and cleaned all the pots for good housekeeping as they were a little bit scratchy: now they're as smooth and silent as the day they left the factory.

Next month I have a Status Groove bass from the early 90s that needs some attention. I can't wait to get stuck into that, as I have always been a Status fan and I've owned a few of them over the years. ■

Costs

The total cost was £400. The bass cost me £350 and I spent a meagre £50 on parts, which is a steal, as I've ended up with a cracking bass that could go head to head with anything on the market at five times the price.

Info: simonmcveigh@eircom.net

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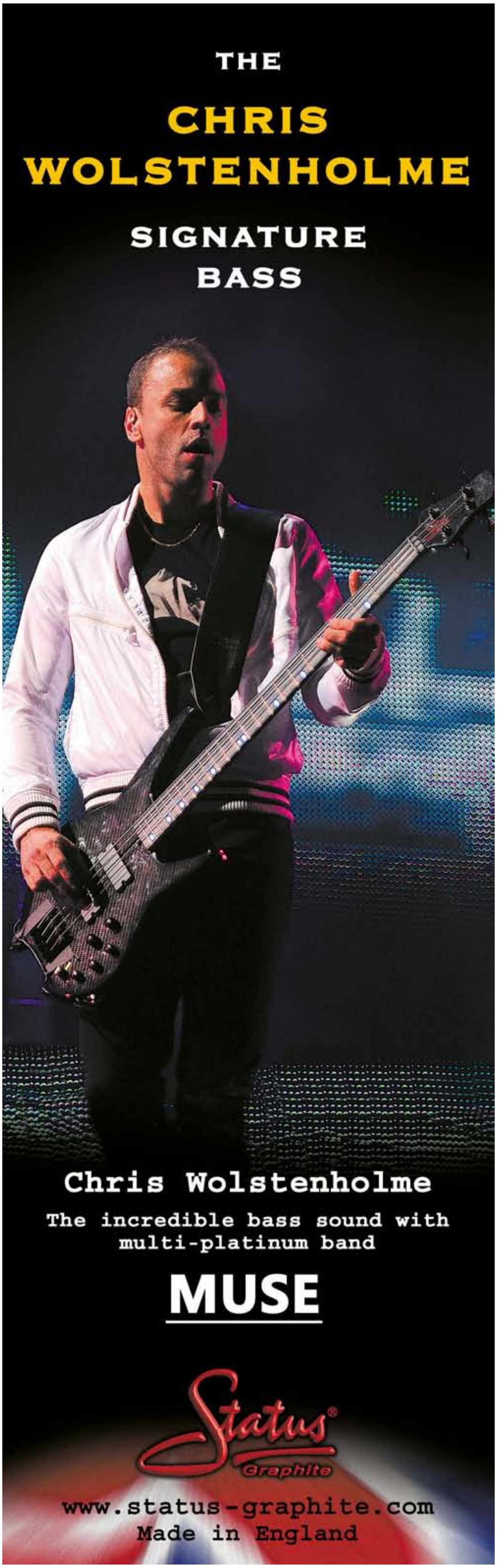


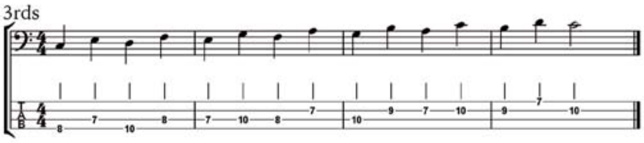
THE BASS SCHOLARSHIP

Hello bass players! I've just started my second term at the Institute, and even though the techniques and songs are a bit more challenging, I'm still having loads of fun learning them. This month I am rehearsing a lot with my colleagues, as we will soon have to perform for the Live Event Project class. For this we have to put together a band and organise a gig at the beginning of February. Pretty cool, eh?

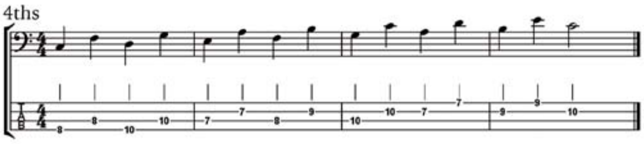
I hope you had a good time playing around the chord changes I suggested to you last time. This month I'm going to give you some exercises that will help you improve your technique, but even more importantly, your fretboard skills and vocabulary. By playing a scale in intervals you can create interesting patterns that you can use while improvising or writing bass-lines. Although you can apply the following exercises to any scale you know, I am going to demonstrate them on the C major scale.

After you get familiar with playing the scale ascending and descending, you can then learn how to play it in 3rds, 4ths and 5ths, over one octave. As you practise and get comfortable with these intervals, you can also try playing it in 6ths and 7ths and over two octaves.

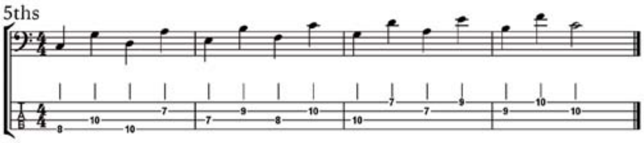
3rds



4ths



5ths



Until next time, stay on the low frequency! ■

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BYRON LUITERS
JOHN BUTLER TRIO

The secret of playing bass well, for me, is not caring: forgetting what you've learned and playing in the moment. My first bass was a four-string Yamaha RBX; my favourite bass ever to date is my 1971 Fender Precision. My bass heroes are Stuart Zender, Paul Jackson, Pino Palladino, Chuck Rainey, Flea, Stanley Clarke, Larry Graham, Willie Weeks and Stevie Wonder. If I could get the bass tone of any album ever released, I would choose Stuart Zender's tone on *The Return of the Space Cowboy*, especially the song 'Scam'. Bad-ass! Our new album *Flesh and Blood* is out now and we're touring Europe, North America, Japan and Oz throughout this year.

www.johnbutlertrio.com

ORION, BEHEMOTH

First of all, I learned a lot through all the years playing guitar and listening to a great bassist who played with me. Then I picked up bass myself, going through all techniques and adapting them to my own needs. My style today is a mixture of all the experience I had before, including work at recording studios tracking other bass players. After all, my style consists of more musical than technical thinking. What I play is rather easy; I try to listen to what works best for the song and the band. I've never treated bass as a solo instrument and it has never been about competing with anyone.
I do not play five- or six-string bass because it's not about the number of tones, it's about what you can do with them. Sometimes it's better to play just one note instead of playing like crazy – it all depends on the arrangement. For most great bass players, four strings are enough to make it all work perfectly. I need the fifth one to add some lower end to a few riffs in our music and I use this fifth string only if necessary, when we need to hear this significant gap between guitars and bass. Anyway, most guitar players say two strings would be enough for the bass, so why would I try playing six? As with every other instrument, bass is all about the ability to listen. Playing bass lies more in your feeling than in your fingers. Obviously, hours of regular training is a must. But then the test is to step up from it, bring your playing to the next level, hear everything else beside yourself and be able to react to it.

www.behemoth.pl

GEAR

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AMPS AMPEG SVT ACOUSTIC 360, FENDER RUMBLE CUSTOM SHOP

DUFFY SNOWHILL
BIGELF

I do not play five- or six-string bass. The joke in Finland is that the two extra strings are just to use as a strap. Bass players are too stupid to play more than four strings. I used to have a five-string Neuser that was great, but I didn't really have a use for it at the time. I have been thinking of getting one again in the future, we'll see. Bass players need to be stable, a good sense of rhythm and practice. My bass heroes are Geezer Butler, Geddy Lee, Jaco Pastorius, John Paul Jones, Pekka Pohjola, Rutger Gunnarsson, John Entwistle, Nick Beggs, Martin Mendez, Lauri Porra, Lemmy Kilmister, Stuart Zender and probably a few others I'm forgetting to mention at the moment.

www.facebook.com/bigelfmusic

GEAR
BASSES ESP CUSTOM BASSES WITH DR STRINGS
EFFECTS DARKGLASS ELECTRONICS MICROTUBES B7K, TECH 21 BASS VT DELUXE, FULLTONE BASS-DRIVE, CLASSIC EBS MULTICOMP
AMPS MARKBASS MOMARK, MARKBASS 104HF CABS

HAYLEY JANE BATT
FREELANCE WHALES, TEI SHI, CATEY SHAW

My bass style is warm and groove-heavy. My four-string Fender Jazz does the trick, and I haven't needed more strings until this point. My job is the low end – so I'll stick to that. I do not slap, because I don't play music that requires it. I have also never had a desire to play slap bass. One day maybe, but right now I'm part of groups and into music that don't call for it. The secret of playing bass well is great timing and groove, listening to other musicians and always serving the song. My first bass was a blonde Fender Jazz that I still play now. I've acquired some other basses over the years, but always go back to this one. My bass heroes are Willie Weeks, Paul McCartney, Carol Kaye, John Paul Jones… the list goes on. The greatest bass player that ever lived is Pino Palladino, although I think it's impossible to choose a best ever. Pino's bass playing made me want to take it seriously. His lines make my nose scrunch up, in a good way. Right now, Freelance Whales are writing and recording their third album, Catey Shaw is about to release her first album and follow with a tour later this year, and Tei Shi is doing the same… so I'm rehearsing with all three bands in preparation for next year.
www.hayleyjanemusic.com

BEN CLARKE, LTNT

I would describe my bass style as heavy, fuzzy and understated while trying to keep it interesting – like a gargantuan wildebeest, subtly galloping along four parallel tightropes. In my mind, the secret of playing bass well is to be super tight with your drummer while keeping your parts interesting. Also, don't be afraid to use your bass as a lead instrument as well as for rhythm: something John Deacon of Queen is an absolute wizard for. My first bass was a repugnant Squier that my parents got me when I first showed an interest. It was crap, but it got me going. My favourite bass to date is my current one, an aquamarine American Fender Precision. My early teens were spent listening to American skate-punk bands that predominantly used these, so when I turned 16 I worked a shitty job for a year to save up enough cash to wander over to Denmark Street and buy the dream bass I still use today. They're built for life. I'm looking forward to getting new basses but I'm also excited at the prospect of growing old with this green bastard. I think the greatest bass player that ever lived was James Jamerson. A back catalogue that Zeus would envy.
www.ltnt.co.uk

GEAR
BASS AMERICAN FENDER PRECISION
EFFECTS ELECTRO-HARMONIX BIG MUFF, SMALL CLONE AND FREEZE
AMPS AMPEG

GEAR
BASSES FENDER JAZZ
EFFECTS NONE
AMPS MARKBASS

GEAR
BASS WARWICK CORVETTE
EFFECTS BOSS VF-1 MFX
AMPS YAMAHA BBT500H WITH 1X15, 2X10 CABS

MARK ROUND, BIRTHRITE

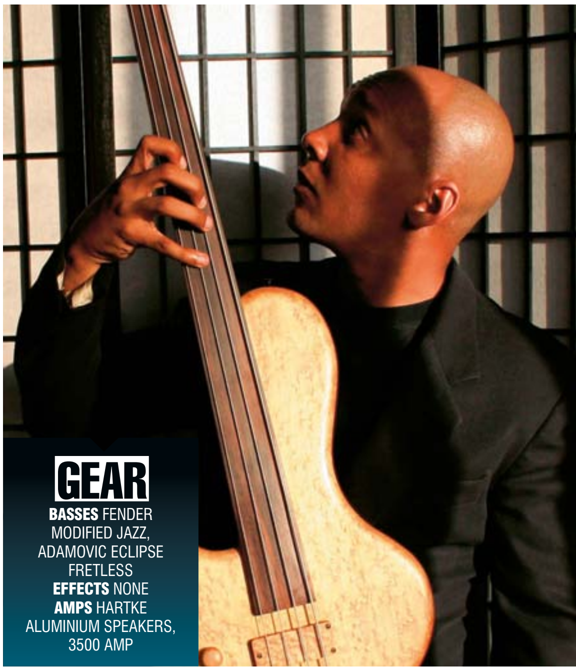
I would describe my bass style as fast finger plucking style. It's funk-influenced, but I love the heavy dirt and darkness of valve. I try to get as much chromatic work in as possible, love a sweet run between octaves, and diabolic intervals. I do not play five- or six-string bass, because low B is just too muddy for the stuff I play. I haven't had the chance to try out a Fender VI or a Burns Barracuda yet – they are on the list of things to make and do though. I slap because it's gooood and it's great fun. But it can detract from the groove if you lay too much in; don't let the song suffer because you are having fun. I try not slap just for the hell of it. Lots of the stuff I play requires a more solid foundation, but I do slap when the rhythm dictates that it's time to go off on one. The secret of playing bass well is practice, practice, practice, and use a bloody metronome, you time travellers. My first bass was a horrible P-Bass copy, with the worst action ever. However, the fine art of shimming brought it back down to an acceptable level. (Not before I'd had a rotary saw to the body, though.) My bass heroes are Norman Watt-Roy, Nathan Watts, The Meters, Bootsy Collins, Larry Graham, JJ Burnel, Bernie Edwards and James Jamerson. Sly Dunbar has this great trick of playing virtually nothing, yet sounding fantastic. Tina Weymouth has the same skill, and Bootsy… Bootsy has his own funk planet carved out of solid funky lumps.
www.birthriteuk.co.uk

STEFANO SELVATICO, SAVAGE MESSIAH

My bass style is meaty and forceful. I always make sure that I keep the bottom end alive and find a way to cut through the guitars at the appropriate moment without over-exaggerating. I play five-string bass, because of the fifth string that can occasionally add a really good bottom end to the band's sound. I don't play slap live with Savage Messiah because it doesn't really suit our style, but I slap when I'm practising at home. It's always a good thing to practise and fun to play. After all, the secret of playing bass well is practice, practice and practice again – never give up! My first bass was a Warwick Fortress One; it was actually my brother's. It was a really good bass to learn on because I found it really comfortable. I really love Warwick basses for their playability and sound, and of course, Fender basses: great instruments that made history in music. My bass heroes are Steve Harris, Cliff Burton, Jason Newsted, David Ellefson, Geezer Butler and Geddy Lee. The greatest bass player that ever lived was Jaco Pastorius; he had everything a bass player needs to be great – or the best, in his case.
www.facebook.com/SavageMessiahMetal

MARK WHITE, SPIN DOCTORS

I slap because I totally love the way it sounds, especially on a Fender Jazz and a Musicman. The secret of playing bass well is listening and having a good idea of what everybody else is doing. My first bass was a $100 right-handed Epiphone bass on which my friend reversed the strings so I wouldn't go through the pain of having the E string on the bottom. My bass heroes are Mark Adams, Bernard Edwards, Jaco Pastorius, Kim Clarke, Larry Ross and Victor Wooten. Children don't learn to speak by going to school; they learn to speak by listening and trying to mimic what they hear.
www.spindoctors.com



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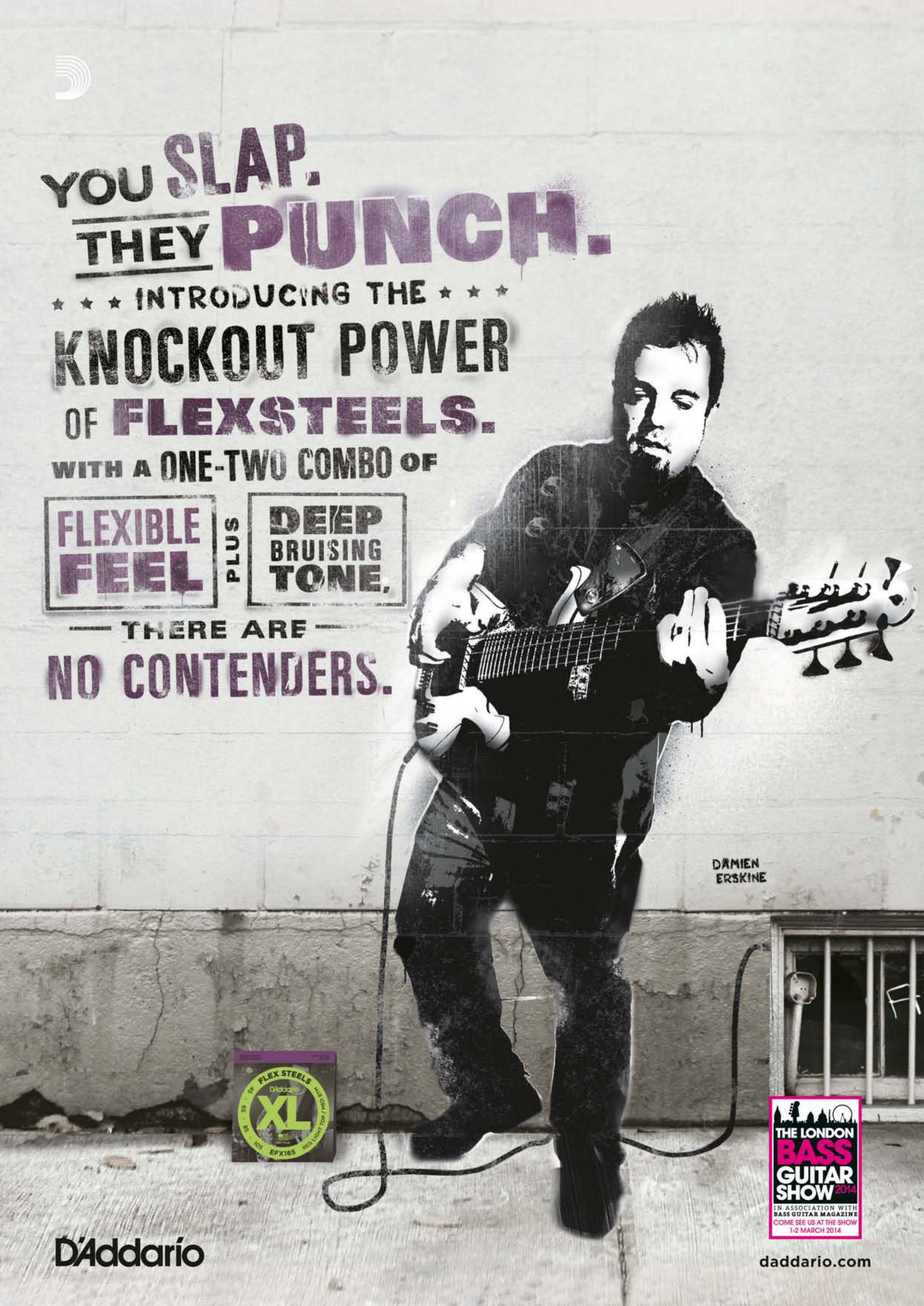
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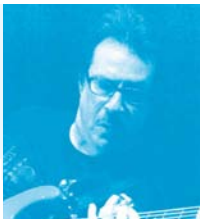
Jeff is regarded as one of the world's most accomplished bass players, and has taught at California's Bass Institute Of Technology. He also owns the Players School of Music in Florida. See ***www.playerschool.com*** for more info or contact the school via ***admissions@playerschool.com.***



JEFF BERLIN

ASK JEFF

Jeff Berlin answers your questions on bass-related matters. Why not contact Jeff today?

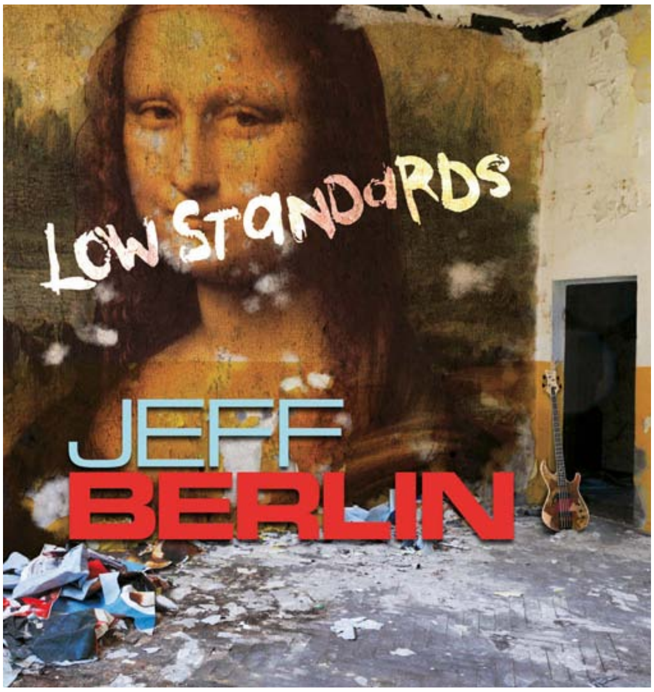
Hi Jeff. Your opinion about learning counts with me, as you know how to play in all styles. How did you do this? Are there any secrets to share that can explain your ability to play what is needed and still sound like you?
Elishum

Hello Elishum.
My melodic approach came simply from being interested in how melody worked. I noticed that bass players in general didn't represent melody very well. I thought that it would be interesting if I could find a way to do it and still retain the bass identity.

To begin, there are no musical secrets to share that will benefit your playing, because there is no such a thing as a musical secret. When it comes right down to it, the only real secret that eludes bass players is music itself, and ironically, this is the only point of learning that most bass players don't want to get involved in.

I am what I am through a lot of hard work. I am no genius! I just love music and learned how to play it. I do admit to a natural gift in music. But the word 'genius' only applies in very rare cases, as with Jaco Pastorius for example. In my day, we also knew and accepted that a baptism of fire, or in other words the passing through the uncomfortable initiation period from being an average or even a mediocre player to being a player of excellence, was mandatory. Remember the story of Charlie Parker who sat in with a band and played so badly that the drummer tossed his ride cymbal on the floor in front of him?

John Fordham, a writer for *The Guardian*, wrote about this as follows: "While drummer Jo Jones's pulse surged on behind him, Parker lost the tune, and then the beat. Jones stopped, and Parker froze, clutching his saxophone. Jones contemptuously threw a cymbal at his feet, and the reverberations were followed by the sound of laughter and catcalls. Ross Russell, Charlie Parker's biographer, has the



teenager leaving the club saying to himself, 'I'll be back', and he kept his promise!"

Today, the fragile ego of the bass community, and the unmusically inspired way that bassists prefer to teach and learn, have almost stopped new bass players of quality from emerging into the music scene. If I became what I became as

> "I AM WHAT I AM THROUGH A LOT OF HARD WORK. I AM NO GENIUS! I JUST LOVE MUSIC AND LEARNED HOW TO PLAY IT. I DO ADMIT TO A NATURAL GIFT IN MUSIC. BUT THE WORD 'GENIUS' ONLY APPLIES IN VERY RARE CASES"

a player, it is because I learned correctly, played with the right people, and tolerated the metaphorical cymbal that was thrown in my direction until I learned how to play better. Believe me, it was thrown a lot. I had to endure a lot of comments and criticisms until I learned enough to earn my way to a place of musical respect.

To sum up, I listened to non-bassists to learn how to play melodically. I played with the best musicians in the world on a regular basis. I studied with the best music teachers I could find. And I ducked that cymbal and learned to play, so that they wouldn't throw it at me anymore. ■

I want to help you improve your bass playing. Contact me and your question, plus my answer, may well appear in the next issue. You can email me directly at talkingbassnotes@yahoo.com, or if you prefer you can post your question at www.facebook.com/bassguitarmagazine. What are you waiting for?

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THE MU PAGE

Maddy Radcliff, the MU's campaigns and public affairs officer, talks merch – and how it could benefit your band

Whether you are a live act or a studio project, developing a range of attractive merchandise and establishing reliable points of sale will undoubtedly enhance the profile of your band and make you money. The two keys to success? A winning image, and locating the most effective point of sale.

Creating the right image is vital, for your band and for the success of your merchandise. Do not settle on the first idea that comes along: consider each proposal carefully. Look at cost and feasibility. Think about whom you are selling to and what they want. Most bands offer their fans a range of merchandise.

It is important that once you have made a decision, you construct a letter of agreement and assignment of copyright between you and the designer outlining their consent for you to use the artwork on your merchandise, in return for appropriate fees and/or royalties.

Many bands have started to think about where and how they source their merchandise, and those ethics have become part of their image. The Ethical Threads project and the Ethical Clothing Company are not-for-profit initiatives that provide clothing and merchandise sourced from workplaces that meet international conventions on workers' rights, and are verified by free trade unions. To find out more about their work or to place a merchandise order, visit www.ethicalthreads.co.uk.

Once you have got your product, it is time to think about the most effective points of sale. Number one is the gig. Expect to pay a commission to the venue on merchandise sold. Other ways of shifting merchandise include selling through local retail outlets such as record and clothes shops. Again, expect to pay a commission, and choose the outlets carefully, based on your audience.

Selling online is an effective and expected way to keep things ticking over between gigs. If you operate a mailing list for your fans or are releasing an album, set aside space to remind readers of merchandise available at the same time. Remember, whatever images and products you plump for will be influential in determining the level of public interest in the band. Merchandise can bring money in and help build a sense of community around your music.

Are you an MU member? You can contact your Regional Office for individual, specialist advice on all of the above, plus other questions you may have about your career as a musician. ■

> "DO NOT SETTLE ON THE FIRST IDEA THAT COMES ALONG: CONSIDER EACH PROPOSAL CAREFULLY. LOOK AT COST AND FEASIBILITY. THINK ABOUT WHOM YOU ARE SELLING TO AND WHAT THEY WANT"

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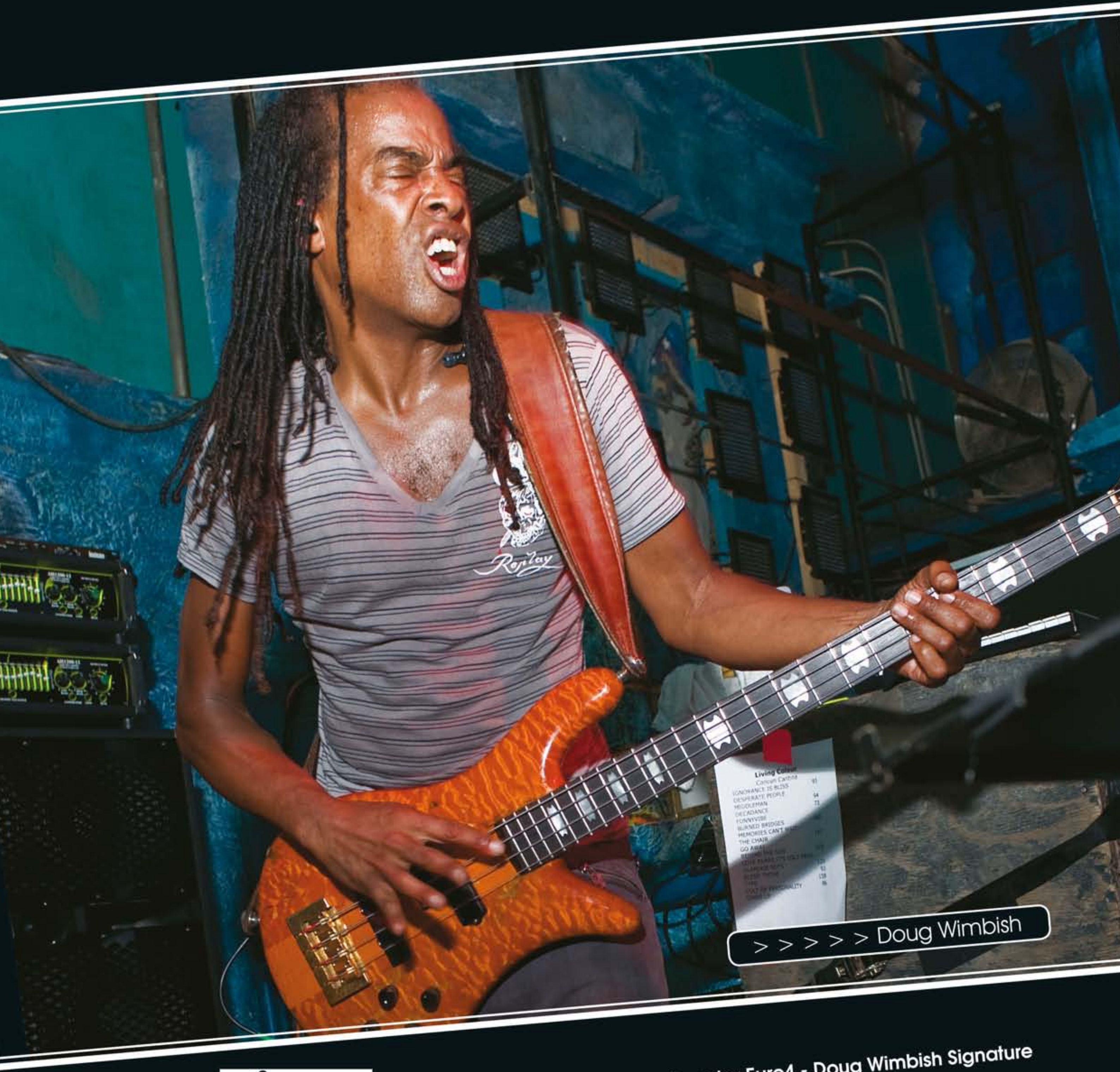

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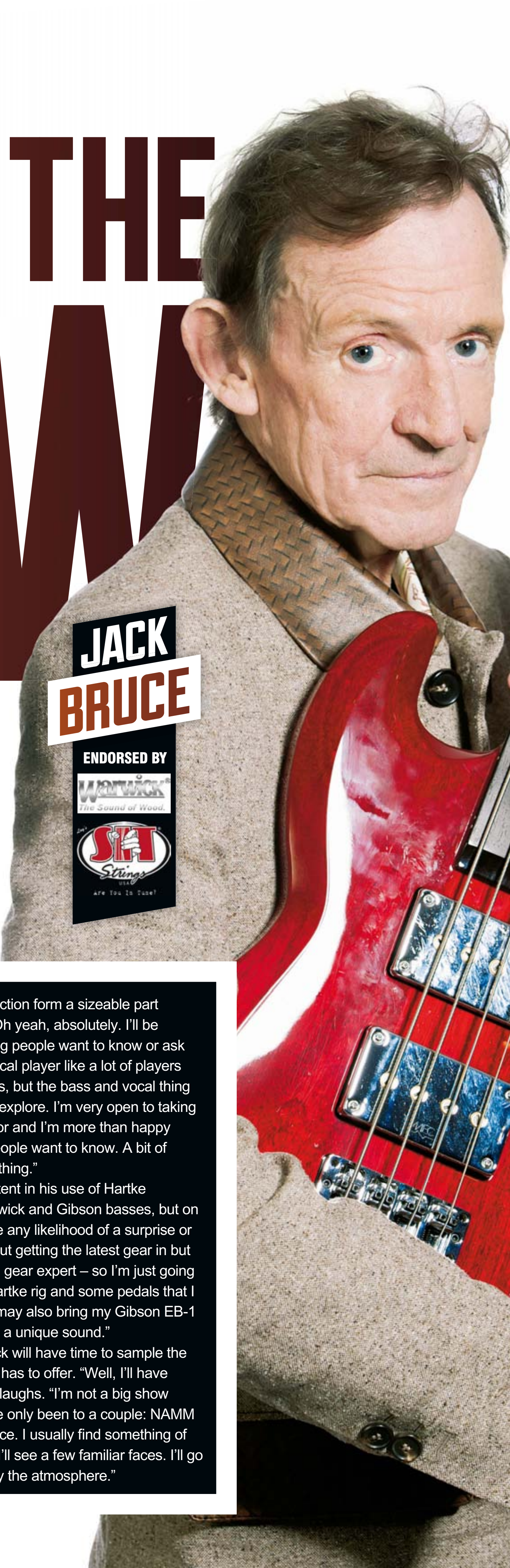

JACK BRUCE

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SIT Strings USA Are You In Tune?

THE LONDON BASS GUITAR SHOW 2014 IS ALMOST ON US! MIKE BROOKS AND JOEL MCIVER MEET JACK BRUCE, ROGER GLOVER, JOHN TAYLOR, LEE SKLAR, JEFF BERLIN, FRANK BELLO, FREEKBASS, LORENZO FELICIATI, PAUL TURNER, STEVE LAWSON, MO FOSTER, ARMAND SABAL-LECCO AND COLIN EDWIN FOR A PREVIEW OF THE TREATS ON OFFER – PLUS A FIRST LOOK AT THE EXHIBITORS

Hot on the heels of his front cover interview in the 100th issue, Jack Bruce will be providing a bass Masterclass at 2pm on Sunday 2 March in association with SIT Strings and Warwick. A legendary bass pioneer with a vocal delivery to match, Jack pre-empts the release of his new album *Silver Rails* in March with a performance for us at the show.

Talking to us from sunnier climes, he had this say about his plans for the show: "It's very, very much a work in progress at the moment. I'll be looking at a variety of bass parts and riffs and bits of music that have influenced me over the years. I'll also play some of my stuff and some other people's material too, and I want to explore the relationship between bass and drums in a rhythm section as that is very interesting for bass players to think about, something along those lines. I'll also cover singing while playing bass, which I know some players find quite difficult. I may play some stuff from my new album, *Silver Rails*, as there are some interesting bass parts and riffs on the record. I'll probably just bring a drummer with me – and being the hallowed halls of bass, full of bass players, there won't be any guitarists."

Will audience interaction form a sizeable part of the Masterclass? "Oh yeah, absolutely. I'll be demonstrating anything people want to know or ask about. I'm not a technical player like a lot of players at these sorts of shows, but the bass and vocal thing will be a good area to explore. I'm very open to taking questions from the floor and I'm more than happy to discuss anything people want to know. A bit of spontaneity is a good thing."

Jack is fairly consistent in his use of Hartke amplification and Warwick and Gibson basses, but on the off chance, is there any likelihood of a surprise or two? "I've thought about getting the latest gear in but to be honest, I'm not a gear expert – so I'm just going to use my standard Hartke rig and some pedals that I use now and again. I may also bring my Gibson EB-1 with me as it has such a unique sound."

We wondered if Jack will have time to sample the delights that the show has to offer. "Well, I'll have a wander around!" he laughs. "I'm not a big show attendee as a rule, I've only been to a couple: NAMM once and Frankfurt once. I usually find something of interest and no doubt I'll see a few familiar faces. I'll go with the flow and enjoy the atmosphere."

LEE SKLAR

ENDORSED BY

One of the biggest draws of the weekend will be the performance by the bass legend that is Mr Leland Sklar, in association with Warwick. One of the elite live sidemen and the embodiment of a studio legend, a first-call player for bands, artists and producers the world over, Lee's credits list can feel like you're reading *War And Peace*.

With many attendees looking forward to meeting the great man, what does Lee have in store for us? "Not a clue!" he says. "I've never been to the show before and am excited to be able to check it out, see what's going on and hook up with friends! I'm not a big 'chops' player so I'm hoping to be in a situation where I can interact with others, talk about my career and the demands of being a studio and touring bassist. I'll play along with some track stuff that I have, but my main experience as a bassist is when the red light comes on. It'll be an adventure for me as much as it will be for the audience. I've only done a few clinics and it's not a big part of my repertoire! Be patient with the old guy, please!"

Will Lee be taking questions – and are any subjects off limits? "I'd love to interact as much as possible with the audience, field questions and find out what others are doing with bass. I'll try very hard to be open and as candid as possible. Showing off how I play a scale is not what I'm about."

As a player who has covered every possible genre of music and used an array of equipment to do the job, are there any particular basses we can expect to see the great man brandishing at the show? "I'll have my Warwick Starbass II with me, which is an off the shelf model. The only change on it is the mandolin fretwire that I use on all of my basses. I'll explain at the show how this came to be. I use Euphonic Audio amps but I don't know if they'll be there, in which case I'll sort out the amplification issue when I get to the show. I'll have my laptop with me, which has a compilation of things I've done – just to show the diversity of the things that I, as a studio player, have to deal with. The only surprise would be if I break a string or pass out! I have a very simple setup when I work, no pedals unless needed, just an amp, DI and a bass. Oh yeah... the cord!"

Lee will no doubt have plenty of tales to tell at the show but for those reading this, he had these words of wisdom to impart. "I'm most excited to be meeting other players and seeing what's new. I'm very happy with what I have and I'm not a big gear head but I'm always open to new ideas. The community of bassists is a wonderful thing and I'm happy to be a part of it and look forward to seeing old friends and making new ones. Have fun! That is what it's all about, enjoy the gift that is music and be involved on any level you can."

FREEKBASS

Bringing the American funk over to merrie England, Freekbass is bound to deliver a dazzling performance – so what gear will he be playing?

"A Fender Jazz," he tells us. "I have developed a new love for Fender basses, specifically Jazz basses with passive pickups. They're so warm and comfortable to play. Plus I play pretty heavy-handed and the Fenders can take some pounding!"

He adds: "In my masterclass I plan on focusing on the art of the groove and how to create bass-lines from almost a 'creating beats' perspective from your bass. I started off as a drummer and still think of myself as a drummer that plays notes.

With some of the groups I tour with, there is a DJ creating beats, and I come up with bass-lines based on what they do. Plus I will focus on some techniques I use such as the double-thumb, and the hard mute bounce. I hope to see many of the other great bassists at the show, and hopefully discover a new pedal or two for some new sounds."

What gear is he most looking forward to trying out, we wonder? "Pedals, pedals, pedals!" he laughs. "I get so excited creating new sounds with my bass. Pedals are almost like tattoos are for some folks. Each new one I add, makes me want to add more. It's verging on obsession but I think I might have it under control... look out for my new solo album in March and we'll see!"

FRANK BELLO

ENDORSED BY

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American thrash metal bass would never have become the thing of beauty it is without Chicago-based Frank Bello of Anthrax, a man whose fingerstyle flurries have left three generations of headbangers speechless. We're delighted to welcome him to the LBGS, in association with Hartke, Korg UK and Samson. Expect to see miraculous playing from our man, courtesy of his Hartke 8x10 Hydrive cab and LH1000 bass head, plus his ESP signature bass, as featured on *BGM's* cover a couple of issues back.

"I like to keep it light and have a good time. Have some fun and interact with the people that are there!" Bello declares. "I hear that *Bass Guitar Magazine* is going to be installing a whiskey bar onstage with me?" He wishes... "I like pedals and making different sounds, so that's where I'll be after I play. Then the pub!" It's our round, Frank.

JEFF BERLIN

ENDORSED BY

PROEL
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Keep an eye out for *BGM* columnist and living legend Jeff Berlin at the London Bass Guitar Show, in association with Proel International, Cort and Markbass. He'll be equipped with his brand-new Cort signature model as well as his tried-and-trusted Markbass rig. The new Cort, revealed for the first time to the public at the LBGS, is called the Rithimic and features an alder body with a spalted maple and padouk top. Outfitting the body are a pair of Bartolini Jeff Berlin custom soapbar pickups, a Babicz FCH4 bridge, a volume control, a balance control, a tone control, passive electronics and gold hardware. The maple neck comes with a rosewood fingerboard and four inline headstock featuring Hipshot Ultralight tuners.

"I will demonstrate the positive side of learning music," says Jeff, "and the negative side of learning other methods, to give people the chance to see the general and specific differences between music-first and non-musically motivated learning principles. I will ask people to come up and demonstrate certain elements of playing versus practising." Got a question for Jeff? Be there and ask it!

We're delighted to announce the appearance of Jamiroquai bassist Paul Turner at the London Bass Guitar Show, in association with Aguilar. Sunderland-born Paul is a mainstay of the British jazz-funk scene, having begun his career with soul legends Ruby Turner and Edwin Starr before moving to man the low end along a stellar cast of musicians including Annie Lennox, Tina Turner, Bryan Ferry, Tom Jones and George Michael. Paul is bringing his side band Shuffler to the LBGS and this groove-heavy band is sure to get some serious booty shaking. The band line up is Rob Harris, Derrick McKenzie (guitar and drums, also with Jamiroquai) and Daniel Pearce (vocals and percussion).

Paul tells us: "I'll be playing my Alleva Coppolo LG5, my white 1966 Fender Jazz at the show, and – if it's ready! – a custom Cora from Jens Ritter. I use Aguilar for amplification: a DB751 and two GS410 cabinets. My pedals include a 3 Leaf Wonderlove and You're Doom as well as a Boss OC2, Aguilar Filter Twin and Lehle Basswitch. We'll be performing a killer mixture of interesting funk and soul covers and original material, that will make heads nod and feet tap!"

ARMAND SABAL-LECCO

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PAUL TURNER

ENDORSED BY aguilar

We're delighted to announce that session legend Armand Sabal-Lecco will be appearing at the LBGS in association with Warwick. Born in Cameroon, Armand has played and recorded with a stellar list of musicians since he first emerged into the spotlight with Paul Simon in the late 80s. Since then he has played alongside Sting, Ray Charles, Herbie Hancock, the Brecker Brothers, Manu Dibango, Ladysmith Black Mambazo and many others, providing singing, songwriting and arranging in many cases as well as bass. He has written for Carole King, Jeff Beck, Robin Thicke, Stewart Copeland and John Patitucci as well as releasing his own material. Expect some amazing tales...

MO FOSTER

LORENZO FELICIATI + COLIN EDWIN

You've heard the phrase 'impressive CV' before? Well, check out what Mo Foster's been up to over the last 50 years. In the 60s he formed a progressive jazz/rock group called Affinity, which was managed by the late Ronnie Scott before forging a live career alongside artists such as (deep breath) Jeff Beck, Phil Collins, Joan Armatrading, Gil Evans, Gary Moore, Van Morrison with Dr John, Eric Clapton, Sting, Maggie Bell, Dusty Springfield, George Martin, Hank Marvin, Cliff Richard, Roger Glover, Leiber & Stoller, Barry Humphries, Geno Washington, The Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, and The London Symphony Orchestra. As a studio session musician Mo has played on over 350 albums and singles. We'd need a whole extra supplement to fit the entire list here, but just some of them include Gerry Rafferty, Brian May, Ringo Starr, Annifrid Lyngstad of ABBA, Cher, Scott Walker, Tanita Tikaram, Mort Schuman, Peter Green, Meatloaf, Andrew Lloyd-Webber & Tim Rice, Dennis Waterman, Leo Sayer and Kenny Rogers. His film and TV sessions include two Bond films and some classics of the silver screen like Minder. He's been on TV more times than you've dropped picks, released six solo albums and written several books, of which his latest, *British Rock Guitar*, is an amusing, anecdotal, illustrated, semi-autobiographical description of rock's early days in Britain. Mo is now established as a highly respected session musician, record producer, composer, solo artist, author, and now raconteur. The perfect guest for the LBGS, you'll agree.

One of the most exciting dual-bass projects in years is Twinscapes, featuring Lorenzo Feliciati and Porcupine Tree bassist Colin Edwin, both masters of progressive, technical bass. Asked what we can expect from Twinscapes' bass twins at the LBGS 2014, Feliciati explains: "I think that there will be a lot of interesting bass action but also a lot of music. Twinscapes is full of good music and we will show some interesting ways for two bass players to interact and create something without overplaying or filling the other one's shoes. I will be in good company as usual, with Ibanez basses, Markbass amps and effects and D'Addario strings."

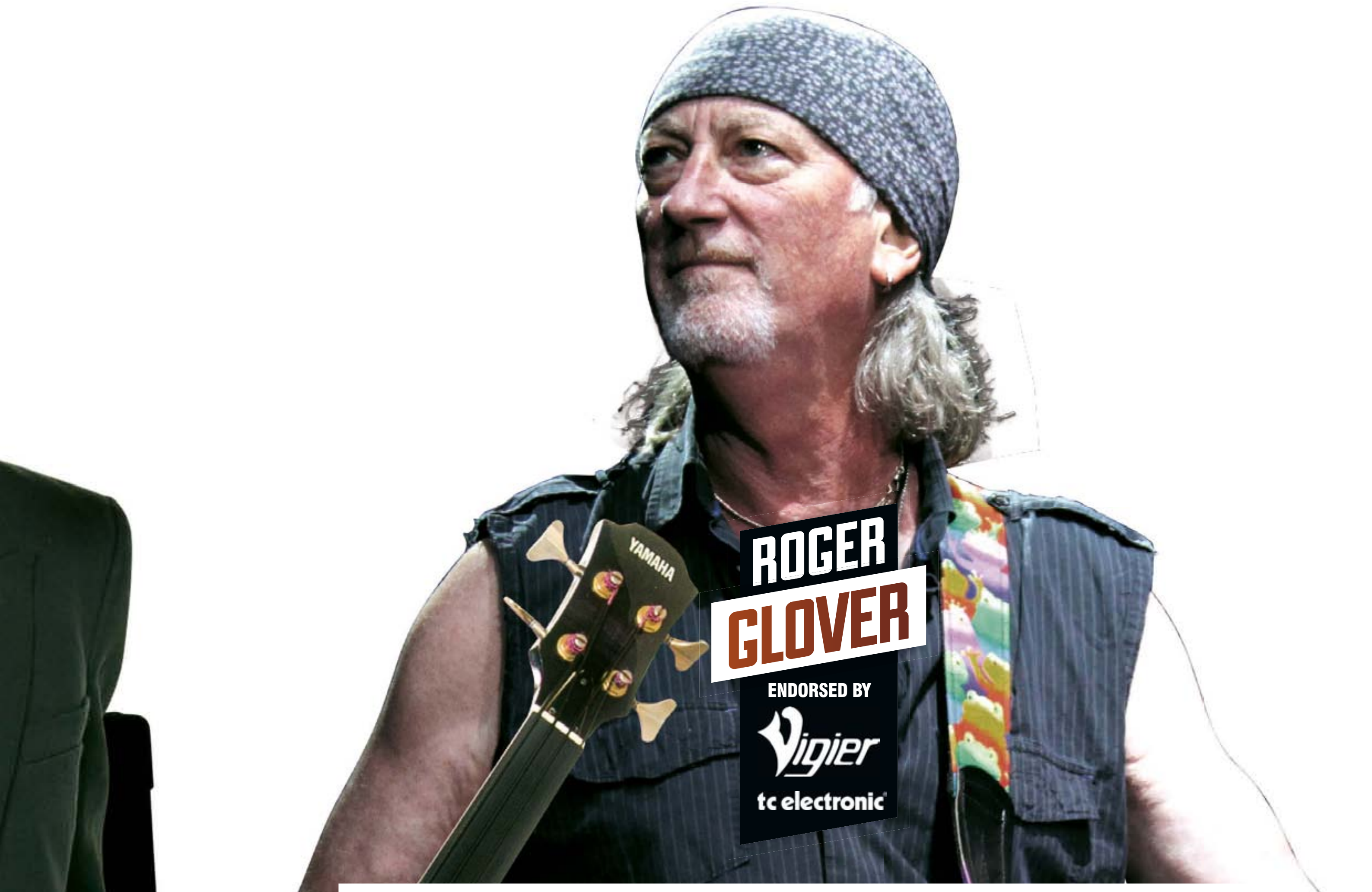
Edwin adds: "Lorenzo and myself will be performing some of the numbers from our album, Twinscapes. I use EBS amplification and selection of EBS pedals, and I'll be using my Spector USA fretless, which has become a firm favourite, strung with D'Addario strings. I've become a big pedal and effects nerd, so I am looking forward to seeing what's new."

A master educator and performer, Steve Lawson is without a doubt the most free-thinking solo bass player ever to emerge from this country. Utilising various effects and software to loop bass parts and create a practically orchestral range of sounds, Steve's music-making approach has to be seen to be believed. Bassists such as Victor Wooten have sung his praises, and we think you'll do the same once you've seen the great man laying down his lines at the London Bass Guitar Show.

STEVE LAWSON

JOHN TAYLOR

John Taylor of Duran Duran has long been acknowledged as one of the most accomplished bassists ever to emerge from Britain's pop and rock scenes. Duran Duran, whose immense success in the 1980s led a whole wave of UK bands to international prominence, have released a long series of hit singles and albums, driven at all times by John's amazing, funk-indebted lines. A disciple of the late Bernard Edwards (and now the owner of Bernard's original Stingray), John plays his bass parts with great economy and melodic fills, while his tone is immediately recognisable. We can't wait to welcome him to the London Bass Guitar Show, where he'll be regaling us with tales from his unique career, many of which can also be found in his new autobiography, *In The Pleasure Groove*.



ROGER GLOVER

ENDORSED BY

Vigier

tc electronic

Flying the flag for all things rock at this year's show is the one and only Roger Glover, in association with Vigier and TC Electronic. As half of one of rock's most enduring rhythm sections, his status as one of rock's paramount bassists is undeniable. In a career spanning almost six decades, his bass-lines are legendary and his work with Deep Purple and Rainbow is indelibly etched on the rock landscape for all to see.

As one of the main attractions at this year's show, we wondered if Roger was using the post-Christmas lull to plan his performance at the show and if he had any tasty nuggets of info for us to look forward to come March. "In a word, no!" he chuckles. "I can't give you a sneak peak because I haven't yet figured out what the game is, other than to say 'be there!' I believe in minimal planning, which is something that's become a sort of philosophy of mine. The best things that have happened to me were never planned. Of course, some menial things have to be planned, like getting there..."

With interaction being an essential part of the performances and masterclasses at previous shows, is Roger ready to interact with the bass hordes? We could all benefit from his years of bass playing experience and insights from having worked at the sharp end of the business. "That's the reason I'll be there," he nods. "The answer is… as much as possible. I don't know what I know, it's only when someone asks me a question that I understand how I feel about something. I don't go around asking myself those questions and after such a long career as a bass player, I must have a lot to say. If only I could think of what it is!"

Having used an impressive arsenal of basses and amps over the years, Roger's tried and trusted current set-up (Vigier basses, TC Electronic amps and cabs) seems fairly well established. Is there any likelihood of a few surprises? "Well, there'll be pyros, dry ice, a small orchestra and four drummers. Oops, I've let it slip… now I can't do that! Expecting surprises? That's a good oxymoron. If there are any surprises, they will be mine as well."

With a busy schedule, it can be tough keeping up to date with friends and colleagues in the industry. Is there anyone that Roger is looking forward to catching up with at the show? "It's always good to bump into old friends, but remembering names is a different matter entirely. There's nothing in particular that I'm looking for, I'm very happy with my Vigier bass and the TC Electronic amp. However, it's always good to see what's new and marvel at the amount of choice there is. It's a big toyshop!"

Be sure to check out Roger's masterclass on Saturday at 2pm and prepare to feel your trousers flap. Final words of wisdom from the maestro to the bass brethren: "Always be on time, be nice to your drummer, don't crap on the bus, and look after your teeth." Wise words!

GE PREV

JUST SOME OF THE EXHIBITORS YOU'LL BE ABLE TO MEET AT THE LBGS… AND A PEEK AT THE GEAR WE WANT THEM TO BRING ALONG

GALLIEN-KRUEGER
The new MBP powered bass enclosures and new additions to the MB amp range should be in evidence alongside existing models from the current range.

AC GUITARS
Look out for some amazing instruments from this fantastic Scottish luthier.

WESTSIDE DISTRIBUTION
With offerings from the likes of Mesa Boogie, TREX Pedals, Schecter, Dunlop and AER acoustic amps, there should something to interest most bassists out there.

MARUSZCZYK INSTRUMENTS
Continental basses just got a lot more interesting. Come and check these out.

FM CABLES
You want high-quality guitar cables? Look no further.

CORT
A full range of accessories for the playing bassist, including cables and cases.

EVE
Awe-inspiring handmade basses from Doug Mullen and his expert team.

ENFIELD/SIMS
The makers of the remarkable Super-Quad pickups system and Fusion and Lionheart bass models will be at front and centre.

RIKKERS BASSES
Dutch, delightful and devastatingly handsome, Rikkers gear is for the true bass lover

HARKTE
A full range of Hartke amps, cabinets and combos, Zoom effects and Samson wireless technology will be evident on the Korg stand

PROMENADE
A sumptuous selection of basses including Fender, Musicman, Warwick, G&L and Overwater will be available to try out through a selection of amps and cabinets.

ELLIO MARTINA GUITARS
Handmade basses from Holland – step up and feel the width.

ELIXIR STRINGS
A full range of Elixir's Nanoweb-coated bass strings will be available to try out.

MARSHALL
The ultimate British heritage amp? We think so. Come and feel the volume..

MSL PROFESSIONAL
The Italian stallions are here once again with a wide range of essential bass gear. Check out MSL's array of Markbass amps, cabs and effects and a variety of audio recording solutions, apps and technology.

MUSICIANS UNION
MU membership includes legal advice, insurance, contract help and advice covering all aspects of being a musician from amateur level through to being a recording artist with number one albums and world tours.

ORTEGA
With their wonderful acoustic basses, Ortega will be a welcome addition to the LBGS.

AR IEWS

AMPEG
The grandaddy of bass amp brands will be present and correct at the LBGS via distributors Polar Audio.

BASS GEAR
Check out Twyford's Bass Gear, who will be bringing a great selection of instruments from the world's top manufacturers.

ANDY BAXTER
The UK's premier bass expert will be on hand at the LBGS with many of his finest instruments.

ANDY BAXTER BASS & GUITARS LONDON

ANACONDA BASSES
Ergonomic, efficient and easy to love, Anaconda instruments are worthy of every bassist's attention.

AGUILAR
Courtesy of UK distributors Barnes & Mullens, New York's finest Aguilar will be showing off their amazing range of amps and pickups.

VANDERKLEY
The full Vanderkley range of their top-notch cabs will be on display for you to try out.

STRINGS & THINGS
All the latest offerings from the Ernie Ball Musicman, Sterling and Sterling Sub ranges will sit alongside strings and accessories from the likes of Picato, GHS, DR, and Jim Dunlop.

BASS CENTRE
London's esteemed Bass Centre shows off their wares.

WARWICK
The veteran German luthiers will be showcasing their new products for 2013, including Jonas Hellborg-designed cabinets and new basses for all budgets.

BASS DIRECT
Midlands-based Bass Direct will be displaying many highly desirable basses, amps and cabinets from a wide range of prestigious manufacturers.

EDEN ELECTRONICS
Gold and black's the cool look for these BGM-approved, Marshall-owned effects pedals and preamps.

BASS LINE PUBLISHING
Bass expert Stuart Clayton will be on hand with his range of bass-friendly titles, print and digital.

TC ELECTRONIC
A full range of amps, cabs, combos and pedals will be on show for bassists to try out, featuring demos of the Tone Print software.

CORT
A full range of accessories for the playing bassist including cables and cases.

ASHDOWN
Come and visit the venerable British amp makers Ashdown, who have plenty of new-for-2014 models to announce.

BIMM
Offering bass courses, diplomas and post graduate courses at their institutes in Bristol, Brighton, Dublin and Manchester.

CUSTOM IEM
Ear protection for the bass player in every band – play low and loud in maximum comfort

D'ADDARIO
The string's the thing with this veteran manufacturer.

EAST UK
With bass amplification at the top of their priority list, East UK are a must-see for any serious bass player.

ZAPPA MUSIC

DWEEZIL ZAPPA, SON OF THE LATE GENIUS FRANK, HAS A FEW LESSONS FOR BASS PLAYERS. JOE BURCAW LISTENS UP

"EVERY DAY IS PACKED WITH CLINICS, MASTERCLASS WORKSHOPS AND INTIMATE, CAMP-ONLY PERFORMANCES BY DWEEZIL AND THE ZPZ BAND"

In 2012 I had the pleasure of attending Dweezil Zappa's brainchild Dweezilla, a music camp dedicated to honouring the compositions of his late father, Frank Zappa. For readers not familiar with Dweezil, or with Frank's extensive body of work, pay close attention to what I am going to share with you today. Since 2006 Dweezil and the Zappa Plays Zappa band have toured around the world, performing Frank's music to audiences young and old, with one main mission statement: keeping the flame alive. Why? Well, in the era of file sharing and corporate-controlled formatted radio, outlets for Frank's music are unfortunately slim to none. That's why it's vitally important for the younger generation of musicians (which includes us bass players) to be educated by this incredible music.

Before I get into the nitty-gritty of how Dweezilla operates, let me share with you some essential listening treasures that every bass player should have in his or her catalogue of Zappa albums. Let me please introduce to you Mr Tom Fowler, who played bass in the early to mid-70s with Frank. I must preface by saying that all of Frank's bass players were stellar musicians in their own right, but Tom was involved with the quintessential ensemble in my opinion, in a time period where this particular line-up raised the bar for being in sync with each other. On top of that, Frank's guitar soloing was at its all-time peak, making it a true listening experience of chaos versus brilliance. In late 1974 the band performed a live concert special for KCET TV entitled *A Token of his Extreme*, which later became *The Dub Room Special*, a CD release. This, my friends, is where you get to hear Tom shine – not only as a bass player but as a musician ensconced in Frank's world.

On top of reciting from memory complicated Zappa lines and runs akin to avant-garde composer Edgard Varese's unorthodox style, Tom never missed a beat, from the start to the finish of this amazing performance. From the slow blues shuffle of 'Stinkfoot' to the insanely difficult passages of 'Inca Roads', a song that features time signatures such as 2/4, 6/4, 3/8, 11/16 and beyond, he plays with total precision, keeping all eyes on the maestro for impromptu gestures at the drop of an arm. If Frank's musicians avoided making eye contact, or happened to miss a cue, he had absolutely no problem letting them know about it.

Another highly recommended release is the *Over-Nite Sensation* album, on which Tom also played bass. Highlights are 'I'm the Slime', a slick rock groove featuring the bass and keyboard as the lead melody instruments. Another gem is 'Fifty-Fifty', a dance fusion tune with over-the-top vocals, reminiscent of the Tony Williams Lifetime project. Fowler's upper-register fills and unorthodox funk lines lie nicely between the syncopation of the 16th-note hi-hat snare pattern laid down by drummer Ralph Humphrey. My advice? Purchase these two Frank Zappa masterpieces.

Now back to Dweezilla. The camp runs on a five-day cycle, from Monday to Friday. Every day is packed with clinics, masterclass workshops and intimate, camp-only performances by Dweezil and the ZPZ band. It's a great opportunity to get inside Dweezil's head, and truly understand what he is trying to convey by carrying on his father's legacy. What blew my mind was how gracious and approachable Dweezil and his band were. Musicians of this calibre could very well have come across as egotistical and full of themselves, but that wasn't the case at all. It doesn't matter if you're a bass player, drummer, horn player or even a non-musician type: your entire outlook on music in general will shift to a higher plane of consciousness and thinking once you've delved into Frank's approach to composing.

So, if you're interested in getting a crash course introduction to the music of Frank Zappa, lost in the woods of the Catskills Mountains of New York, sign up for Dweezilla and the musical experience of a lifetime. ■

Info: www.dweezilzappaworld.com

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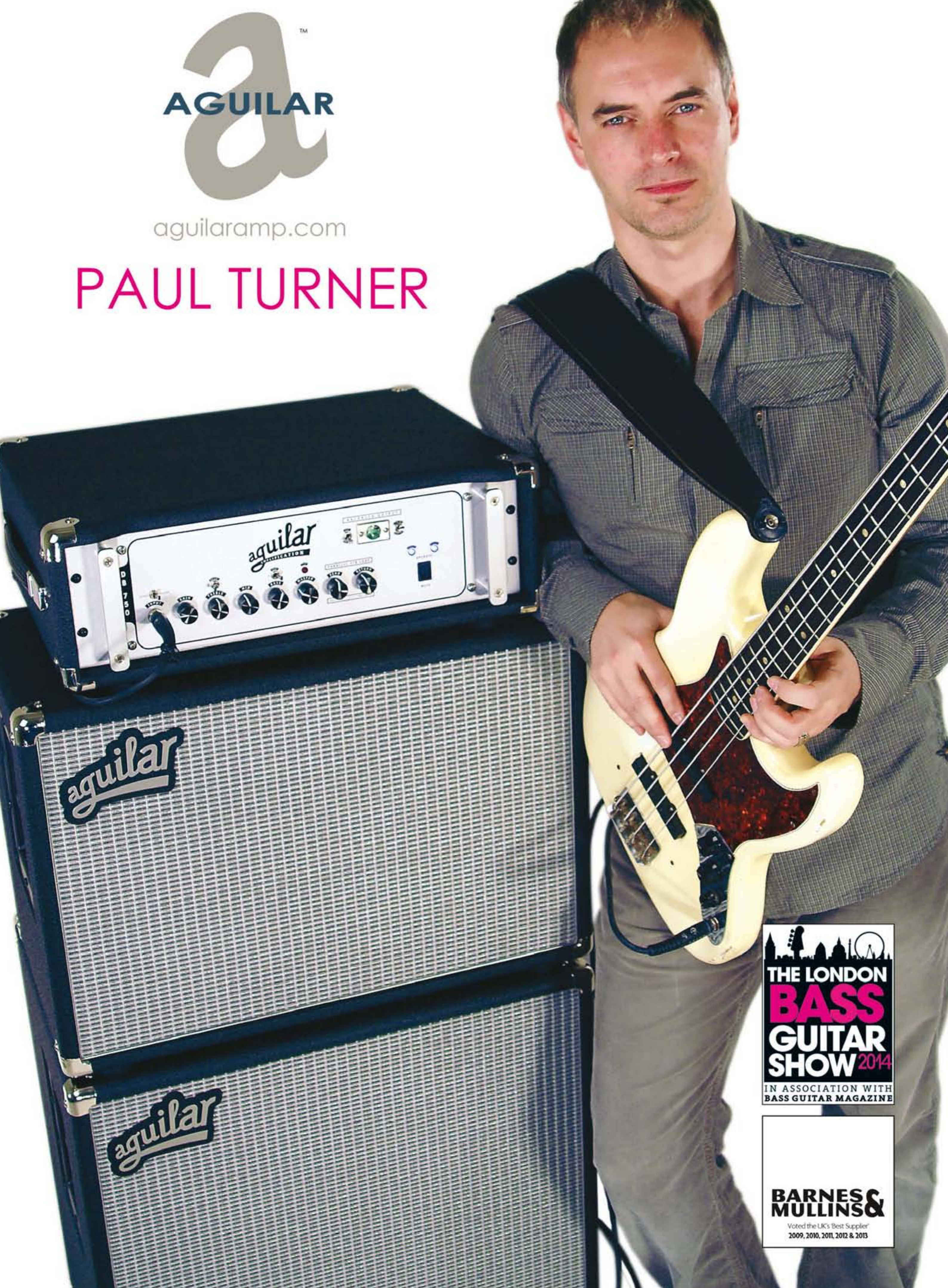

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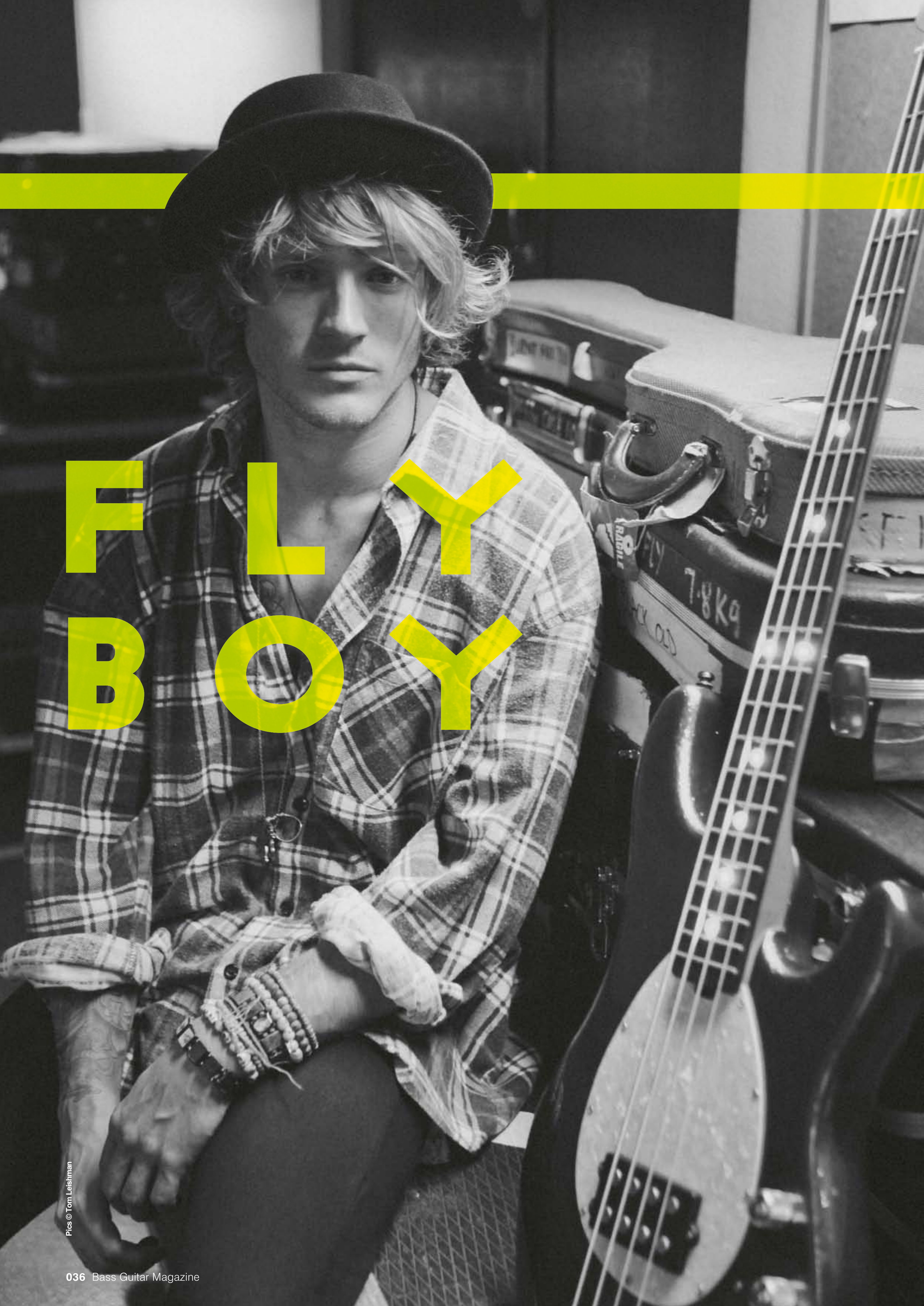
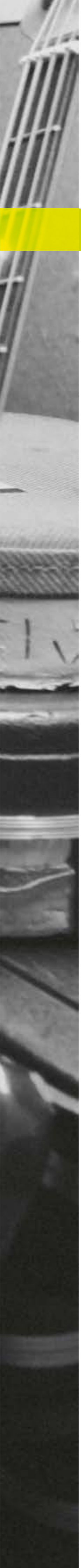
2009, 2010, 2011, 2012 & 2013

FLY BOY



Pics © Tom Leishman



IT'S A DECADE SINCE BRITAIN'S ROCKINGEST BOY BAND FORMED. JACK STEVENS RAISES A GLASS WITH MCFLY BASSIST DOUGIE POYNTER

It's been 10 years since McFly formed, and bassist Dougie Poynter has managed to stay ever-present in the entertainment spotlight, despite high-profile sideline activities such as winning ITV's *I'm A Celebrity… Get Me Out of Here!* reality show in 2011 and launching his own clothing range. We caught up with Poynter, fresh from the band's four-night run at London's Royal Albert Hall. Having performed at nearly every other major music venue and stadium in the UK, how did the Essex-born bass player find these particular shows? "We knew they were going to be special," he replies, "but I don't think we realised how special – and how much fun they were going to be."

Poynter began playing bass around the age of 13. "I only listened to American pop-punk stuff like Blink 182 and New Found Glory, so I was quite a one-dimensional bass player," he admits. "I didn't really listen to many other styles of music, and that showed with my playing. When I joined McFly, it was all about walking bass-lines: they're all up for very McCartney-esque, all-over-the-place kinds of lines, so I really had my work cut out!"

The band's debut album, *Room on the 3rd Floor* (2004), was a blend of skate-pop cheekiness, jangly guitar and teenage-angst themed singles: 'Obviously' and 'Five Colours in Her Hair', both made it to the number one spot in the UK singles charts. As the band have matured from teenagers into adults, the song writing on their later albums has demonstrated McFly's growth. "We've all grown up a little bit more," Poynter says. "We've also had a lot more time to write better songs, and we've done fuck-loads of touring. I don't think you can underestimate how much that can have an influence on you: you see what songs go down well at your shows and what songs are great fun to play."

Asked about *Above the Noise*, McFly's 2010 album, Poynter describes it as an experiment, composed of pop-rock songs given the treatment by an R&B producer. As a result, there is much more of a synth bass presence across the album. "It's different, and probably not naturally what I'd do as a bass player," says Poynter. "I learnt a lot from our keyboard player on how to play and what to do live."

> **"IMAGINE US, SWEATY ENGLISH DUDES IN A DESERT, AND THAT'S WHAT THE NEW ALBUM SOUNDS LIKE"**

McFly have a new album out this year. "Imagine us, sweaty English dudes in a desert, and that's what the new album sounds like," adds Poynter, directing us towards band mate Danny Jones, whose Bruce Springsteen influence is all over the record. "It's actually been about two years in the making," he continues. "We've written a whole bunch of stuff and scrapped a load of stuff, so we feel that the songs that are left are the best of about three albums' worth."

The band spent three weeks in a back-to-basics rehearsal room devoid of any computers or trickery, which adds to the new songs' organic feel. Poynter's bass parts for the songs were developed during this period, and were also influenced by the creative team that had come on board for the recording. "I think you can get caught up sometimes in thinking that you have to move around loads, whereas our producer Jason Perry is more about letting the bass do what it was made for – just driving."

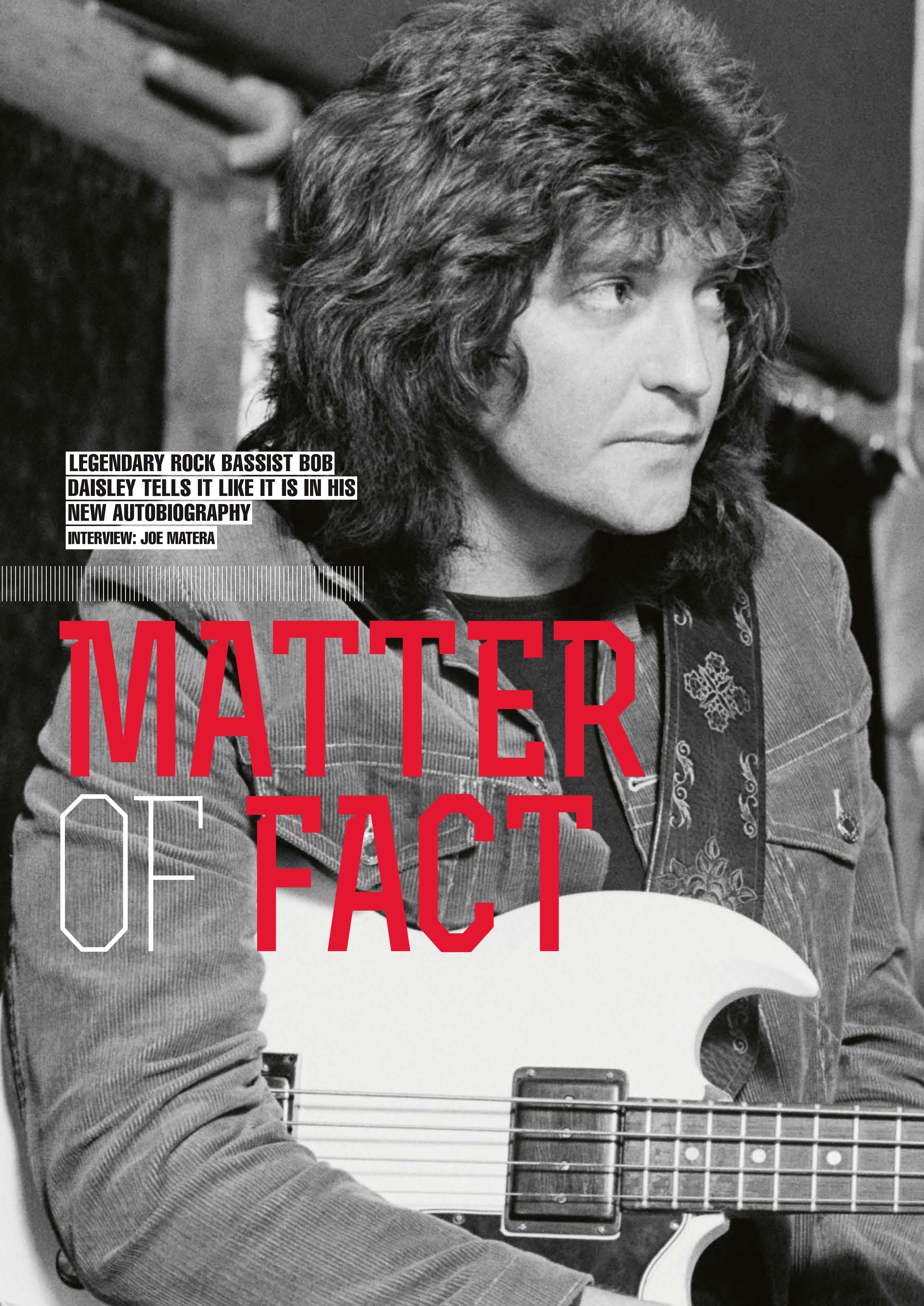
The new album sees the band and Poynter approach the process of making a record in a more traditional manner than on previous outings. "Everything's real on there, and there are little tiny imperfections that make it sound like how people used to make records," says the bassist. "You'd practise the hell out of them and then get a couple of goes at nailing it in the studio. We gave ourselves two weeks of recording for that reason: we don't want too much time in the studio, messing around, overdoing it."

Dougie is rarely pictured on stage without a Music Man Sterling bass, and is an exponent of fingerboard LEDs, installed by British electronics whiz Martin Sims along with his instruments' metal flake finish. "Anything to say, 'Look at me a little bit more'," he laughs. "I always liked the shape of the Stingray when I was growing up, but I always stuck to Jazz basses or Precisions." His decision to invest in a Sterling bass was purely a physical one, he says. "I've got really small hands, which is the worst thing for a bass player to have, and someone was like, 'You know they do a smaller version of the Stingray that you like. Have a go! It's the Sterling'. And I've been playing it ever since. It's Dougie Poynter-sized!"

Tone-wise, Poynter tells us that he's never looked back since combining his MusicMan with his Ashdown octave pedal. He's also partial to the occasional distortion during live performances, which he achieves with the ProCo Rat stomp-box. "I play both with a pick and finger-style: it depends on the songs, because the McFly stuff jumps from music that's quite swung and groovy, like 'All About You', which I consider needs a bit more chilled, professional playing style to it. And then we've got songs like 'One for the Radio' or 'The Heart Never Lies', which are a lot harder, and it's a lot more fun to play with a pick."

Asked about McFly's decade in business, Poynter says: "We've had the same management since day one, and they were the ones who were like 'That whole tenth year needs to be a big celebration'. It's a huge achievement to still be going. Being able to do four nights at the Royal Albert Hall after 10 years is a really incredible thing." It's plain to see from Poynter's overall enthusiasm talking about bass and what's been an extremely healthy career in music, that this may not even be the halfway point for his band. "It's definitely like we've passed the baton on to our future selves," he enthuses. "So there's also a sense of urgency to get on and carry on for the next 10 years. I'm up for a year-long celebration!" ■

Info: www.mcflyofficial.com.



LEGENDARY ROCK BASSIST BOB DAISLEY TELLS IT LIKE IT IS IN HIS NEW AUTOBIOGRAPHY

INTERVIEW: JOE MATERA

MATTER OF FACT

"I JUST WANTED TO PRESENT THE FACTS TO THE READER IN A WAY THAT SAYS, 'HERE, THIS IS WHAT HAPPENED, YOU MAKE UP YOUR OWN MIND'"

"I really don't know why I started keeping a diary, maybe it was a Christmas present from my wife that year, I can't quite recall. There was no specific reason for starting a diary in January 1976, but once I did start, I kept it going and it has come in handy on several fronts over the years. Obviously through some busy times and touring there are some odd blank pages here or there, but most pages are filled in, especially the important events. I kept diaries from 1976, so the timeline and dates are all accurate; there've been no estimates or guesswork.

I actually wrote my new book, *For Facts Sake*, myself – unlike so many other so-called autobiographies which are either co-written with someone else or written by a ghost writer. I think that everybody should have the right to tell the truth, and the truth, by definition, cannot be categorised as slanderous. Besides, I didn't want to sound judgemental or biased, or do any name-calling, and I didn't want to dig up any dirt on people to sensationalise the story – that would've only cheapened it. I just wanted to present the facts to the reader in a way that says, 'Here, this is what happened, you make up your own mind'.

I mention in the book that I've suffered from depersonalisation over the years: I have heard it said that it affects creative and artistic types more than others. When I was first hit with it, I was only 16 and at the time, there was no term for it. It was very difficult to explain to specialists what I was feeling and going through. I've since found out that it is quite a common condition that many people have suffered from. In 2007 I saw a Matthew Perry film called *Numb*, which was a true story about someone who was afflicted by depersonalisation. I also read books about it and learned how common the condition is.

I also talk about the late Gary Moore and my suggestion that he turn towards a blues direction. We were touring in Germany at the time and we used to jam in the tune-up room before shows, and one night we were just messing about with some old blues classics, and I said to him, 'Why don't we do a blues album?' He sort of shrugged it off at first, but he started thinking seriously about it and then decided to do it. I said to him, 'You watch Gary, it'll be the biggest thing that you've ever done'. And the *Still Got The Blues* album was! I thought very highly of Gary as a musician and as a person, and I do miss him greatly.

This book is the story from my birth until now, so that's one life so far! I don't have any plans to do a sequel as this one's a fairly complete story, from a musical standpoint anyway. But you never know, a few years down the track I might've gone through enough events to warrant doing a follow up.

My main philosophy when it comes to bass has been to make bass playing a foundation and backbone to the song, and to make it interesting enough that it has melody. Make sure you're playing with the drums in a percussive way and adding notes to the drum beats, but also make the song or music interesting enough by adding melody. That's not always easy to do!

I would regard myself as an aggressive player who incorporates melody. That sort of sums it up. Listen to different styles and various players, you can learn from them all whether it's blues, jazz, rock, reggae or whatever. The Beatles material is brilliant to learn from and so is Cream and some of the Led Zeppelin stuff. Being influenced by other players, even copying them, is very useful, because eventually your own style will develop.

My proudest bass playing moment on record? It's not necessarily a bass playing moment, but I'm very proud to have been a co-writer, producer and song arranger, and to have played on 'Crazy Train' with the Blizzard Of Ozz. I had an ambition when I was younger that one day I wanted to be involved in a song that would become an epic, a classic, and that ambition has been realised with 'Crazy Train'. Actually, those two albums that we did, *Blizzard Of Ozz* and *Diary Of A Madman*, have both become iconic milestones in rock history. Many music lovers and fans regard them as having set a precedent in that style of music." ■

***For Facts Sake* is available now from www.bobdaisley.com.**

4 String Basses

11818 - Breedlove BJ350/SMe4 Electro Acoustic
10067 - Brian May Bass in Cherry with Gig Bag
9558 - Epiphone Jack Casady Bass Guitar Black
7233 - Epiphone Viola, Vintage Sunburst

Fender

11226 - Fender Ltd Ed Jazz Bass, Candy Apple Red
12417 - Fender Ltd Edition 75 PJ Bass, Sunburst
4882 - Fender USA 62 Vintage Precision Sunburst
10166 - Fender 75 Jazz Bass in Natural
4219 - Fender American Deluxe Jazz, Sunburst
9083 - Fender Am Special Jazz Bass, Sunburst
9231 - Fender Am Standard Jazz Bass, Sunburst
9388 - Fender 70s Jazz Bass, Sunburst
12195 - Fender Jazz Bass in Natural, c.1973/74
12288 - Fender Mike Dirnt Road Worn Precision SB
8113 - Fender Modern Player Available To Order
11001 - Fender Nate Mendel P Bass, C.A.R
9367 - Fender Select Jazz Bass, Amber Burst
12426 - Fender Standard Jazz Bass Brown Sunburst
9909 - Fender Standard P Bass, Lake Placid Blue
7943 - Fender Am Stan Precision Bass, Sunburst
11070 - G&L L2000 Tribute 4 In 3-Tone Sunburst
9138 - G&L L2000 Tribute 4-String, Sunburst
9703 - G&L Tribute JB2 4-String Bass In Natural
11069 - G&L Tribute L2000 4 String In Blueburst
11071 - G&L Tribute L2000 Custom 4 In Walnut
10997 - G&L Tribute SB2 4-String, Metallic Black

Gibson

9593 - Gibson Firebird Studio Reverse 70s Bass
10074 - Gretsch G6073 Electrotone Bass, Burgundy
11189 - Hofner HCT Shorty Bass, Black
12188 - Hofner Violin Bass Ignition Sunburst

LEVIN

4999 - Levin LB100J, Antique Sunburst
6640 - Levin LB200, Cherry Sunburst
6780 - Levin LB400, Redburst

LODESTONE

8073 - Lodestone Primal Artist
8075 - Lodestone Primal Instinct J Bass, Green
8079 - Lodestone Primal Instinct P Bass, Green
8080 - Lodestone Primal Instinct Pbass Sunburst
8081 - Lodestone Primal Pro in Chignal Blue
8082 - Lodestone Primal Pro 4, Tobacco Sunburst
4175 - Marleaux B Votan 4, Black

MUSIC MAN

11015 - MusicMan SR4 Classic Stingray 4, Natural
4781 - MusicMan Stingray 3EQ, True Gold
8250 - Musicman Sterling 4 String Bass, Blue
8997 - Musicman Sterling SB14 Bass, Sunburst

Overwater

8435 - Overwater Aspiration Std 4, Black Cherry
7849 - Overwater Contemporary Jazz, Trans Blue
10962 - Overwater Inspiration 4, Blue Burst
9867 - Overwater Inspiration Jazz PJ 4 String
10102 - Overwater J Series Deluxe 4, Natural
11197 - Spector Bass Performer 4, Red

STEINBERGER

4417 - Steinberger Spirit XT2 4 String Bass
9428 - Tobias Toby Standard IV Bass Guitar, White
10968 - Vintage V4MRSSB ICON, Sunset Sunburst

WestCoast

6446 - Westcoast BG4 Neck Thru Body, Brown
8437 - Westcoast JP1 4 String Bass in Trans Red

YAMAHA

10120 - Yamaha BB1024X 4 String, Caramel Brown
4649 - Yamaha BB2024X, Vintage White
6953 - Yamaha BB424, Vintage White
5634 - Yamaha BB714BS Billy Sheehan, Lava Red
9000 - Yamaha RBX170
10314 - Yamaha RBX170EW Bass
4331 - Yamaha TRB1004J, Trans Black

5 String Basses

10109 - Cort A5 5 String Bass, Open Pore Natural
12415 - Cort B5 20th Anniversary Model Swamp Ash
10110 - Cort B5 5 String Bass Guitar, OPN
12538 - Cort GB75 5 String Bass, Open Pore Nat.
11014 - Fender Jazz Bass 5 String
11068 - G&L Tribute L2500, 5 String, Sunburst
11066 - G&L Tribute L2500 5 String Natural Gloss
9702 - G&L Tribute L2500 5-String In Walnut
11065 - G&L Tribute L2500 Carved Top, Nat Sat
8174 - Lodestone Primal Pro 5, Chignal Blue
12294 - Marleaux Consat Custom Bolt On 5 String
12198 - MusicMan Stingray 5 Honeyburst, Used
9002 - Overwater Aspiration Deluxe Bass, Black
9009 - Overwater Contemporary 5-String Bass
10963 - Overwater Inspiration 5, Red Burst
12561 - Peavey Millenium BXP 5-String Bass
10960 - Pedulla Rapture Fretted 5-String Bass
5121 - Rockbass Streamer LX5, Black
12406 - Spector Legend Custom 5 String, Amber
7870 - Warwick Infinity 5, Natural
6448 - Westcoast JB5, Trans Amber
9351 - Yamaha BB425 5 String Bass Guitar, Black
8999 - Yamaha RBX5A2 5 String Bass, Black
8023 - Yamaha TRB1005J 5 String, Caramel Brown
4889 - Yamaha TRB1005J Bass, Natural
10308 - Yamaha TRBX305 Bass
10310 - Yamaha TRBX505 Bass

Acoustic Basses

4783 - Breedlove Atlas Stage BJ350/CR4
8687 - Breedlove Passport Plus B350/CB4
5393 - Levin LAB150 Bass, Electro 4, Black
5394 - Levin LAB150 Bass, Electro 4, Natural
5392 - Levin LAB150 Bass, Electro 4, Sunburst
6782 - Levin LB100 Bass, Electro 4, Sunburst
12318 - Ortega D Walker Red Acoustic Bass
12351 - Ortega D Walker White Short Scale
12320 - Ortega D3C5 5 String Bass
10498 - Ortega D Walker Acoustic Bass, Black
12307 - Tanglewood DB TAB Acoustic Bass
12361 - Tanglewood Odyssey TMO B2
12292 - Westfield PJB380 Acoustic Bass Natural

Electric Upright Basses

4910 - Bridge Cetus Electric Double Bass
5110 - NS Design NXT Electric Double Bass
6360 - Yamaha SLB200 Silent Double Bass

Fretless Basses

6445 - Westcoast BG5 Fretless, Natural

String Deals

2 Sets of Elite (4 String) £25 inc P&P
2 Sets of Elite (5 String) £30 inc P&P
2 Sets of Rotosound (4 String) £25 inc P&P
2 Sets of Rotosound (5 String) £30 inc P&P
2 Sets of D'Addario (4 String) £35 inc P&P
Sets of D'Addario (4 String) £40 inc P&P

Bass Combos

6762 - A arena BASS45 (45W, 1x12)
5627 - AER Amp One (200W, 1x10)
4942 - AER Amp Two (240W, 1x12)

Ashdown Engineering

4389 - Ashdown 220 Touring 112 (220W, 1x12)
4388 - Ashdown 220 Touring 115 (220W, 1x15)
4385 - Ashdown 330 Touring 115H (300W, 1x15)
5066 - Ashdown 550 Touring Hybrid (550W, 2x10)
6759 - Ashdown ABM C115 500 Evo 3 (575w, 1x15)
11192 - Ashdown ABM C115H Neo Evo 3 Combo
6459 - Ashdown ABM C210T-500 EVO 3 (575W, 2x10)
12259 - Ashdown ABM Mini 115 NEO Bass Combo
12258 - Ashdown ABM Mini 210 NEO 2x10Combo
11193 - Ashdown ABM NEO C210 400W 2x10
8712 - Ashdown ABM414H 4 x 10 Bass Cabinet
8714 - Ashdown After Eight 20 Bass Combo
4396 - Ashdown DP200 Drophead 15H (200W, 1x15)
8757 - Ashdown Electric Blue 12 220
8758 - Ashdown Electric Blue EB15 220
5669 - Ashdown EB180 12 Evo2 (180W, 1x12)
5668 - Ashdown EB180 15 Evo2 (180W, 1x15)
8751 - Ashdown Five Fifteen ABM100 Combo
8753 - Ashdown Five Fifteen Mini Rig 100
4397 - Ashdown LB30 Drophead 115H (30W,1x15)
8718 - Ashdown Mag C115 300 Evo III Combo
8722 - Ashdown Mag C210T 300 Evo III Combo
8720 - Ashdown Mag C210T 300 Bass Combo
8727 - Ashdown Mag C410T 600 Evo III
9320 - Ashdown MiBass C110-200
9321 - Ashdown MiBass C115 550 Bass Combo
8750 - Ashdown Perfect Ten 40 Bass Combo
9311 - Ashdown TE12 C115h Bass Combo
9310 - Ashdown TE12 C210h 12 Band Combo
5224 - Ashdown Tourbus 10 (10W, 1x6.5)
5062 - Ashdown Tourbus 15 (15W, 1x8)
8988 - EA Euphonic Audio iAmp 350 Bass Head
12430 - Eden EC10 50 Watts Bass Amp Combo
12432 - Eden EC15 180W Bass Amp Combo
12431 - Eden EC210 2 x 10 Bass Amp Combo
12429 - Eden EC8 20 Watt Bass Combo

Fender

4238 - Fender Rumble 15 (15W, 1x8)
8284 - Fender Rumble 30 Bass Combo
4237 - Fender Rumble 350 (350W, 2x10)
4772 - Fender Rumble 75 Watt Bass Combo

Hartke®

10104 - Hartke A35 35W Bass Combo
9278 - Hartke A70 Solid State Bass Amp Combo
9471 - Hartke David Ellefson A70 Bass Combo
9008 - Hartke HMH112C Bass Combo
9281 - Hartke Hydrive HMH210C Bass Combo
9279 - Hartke Kickback 15 Bass Amp Combo

Mark bass

9004 - Markbass 121 Lite Alain Caron Combo
6239 - Mark Bass CMD102P Bass Combo
6238 - Mark Bass CMD103H (400W, 3x10)
5472 - Mark Bass CMD151P J Berlin (300W, 1x15)
5473 - Mark Bass Micromark (50W, 1x6)
6240 - Mark Bass Mini CMD121P (300W, 1x12)
5474 - Mark Bass Mini CMD151P (300W, 1x15W)
5471 - Mark Bass Minimark (250W, 2x6)
5475 - Mark Bass CMD121H (300W, 1x12)
9940 - Markbass Mini CMD 151 Jeff Berlin Combo
9939 - Markbass MiniMark 802 Bass Combo

Marshall

5433 - Marshall MB4210 (450W, 2x10)
5658 - Marshall MB4410 (450W, 4x10)
6769 - Marshall MB60 (60W, 1x12)
9938 - MicroMark 801 Bass Combo
5234 - Orange Crush PiX 25BX (25W, 1x8)
5233 - Orange Crush PiX 50BXT (50W, 1x12)
10265 - Orange Crush Pix CR100BXT
10264 - Orange Terror Bass 500 Bass Amp Combo
8061 - Peavey MAX126 10 Watt Bass Amp Combo
11005 - Peavey Max 110 Bass Amp Combo
5965 - Peavey Max 112 (35W, 1x12)
5964 - Peavey Max 115 (50W, 1x15)
11004 - Peavey Max 158 Bass Amp Combo

Roland

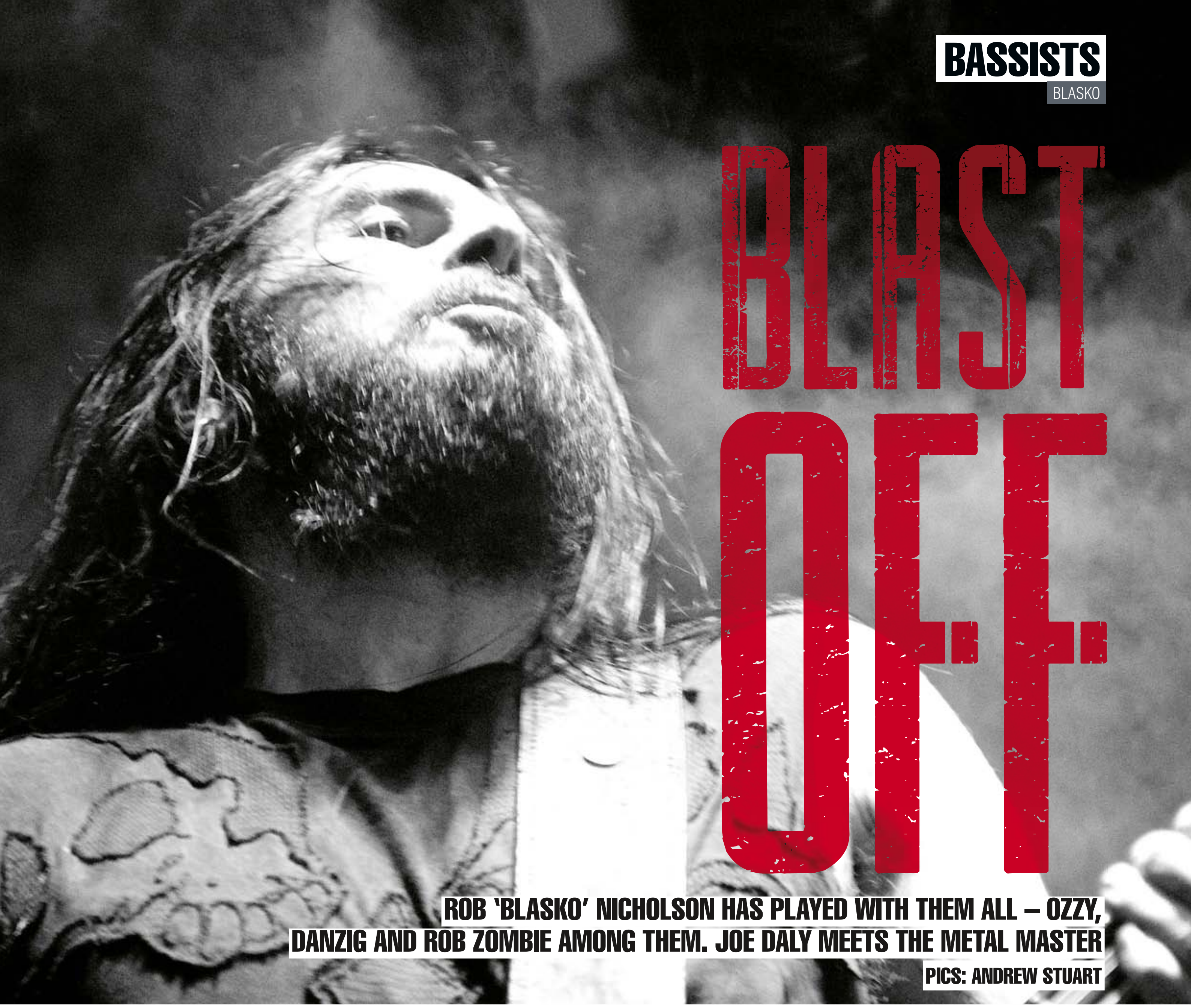
6320 - Roland CB100 (100W, 1x12)
4433 - Roland CB120XL Cube 120X (120w, 1x12)
4435 - Roland Cube 20XL BASS (20W, 1x8)
4434 - Roland Cube 60XL (60W, 1x10)
5678 - Roland Microcube Bass RX, (5W, 4x4)
4599 - TC Electronic BG500 115 500W, 1x15

Bass Heads

4387 - Ashdown 330, 330W
4398 - Ashdown 427 Small Block 427W
4384 - Ashdown 550, 550W
8706 - Ashdown ABM1000 Lite Evo III
8704 - Ashdown ABM2000 Lite Evo III
6760 - Ashdown ABM500 EVO III 575W
6250 - Ashdown ABM500RC Evo III 575W
6761 - Ashdown ABM900 EVO 3, 575+575W
4399 - Ashdown JJ500 JJ Burnel Sig 575W
5338 - Ashdown BTA400 400W
11229 - Ashdown CTM15 15 Watt Bass Amp Head
8707 - Ashdown CTM300 Classic Tube Magnifier
4395 - Ashdown Drophead DP200H 200w Valve
5064 - Ashdown Little Bastard 30, 30W
8708 - Ashdown Little Bastard 550 Head
6455 - Ashdown MAG300H Evo III 300W
10938 - Ashdown MIBASS 2.0 640w Small Head
9056 - Ashdown Mag300H Evo2 Bass Amp Head
8713 - Ashdown Mag600 Head Evo III Bass Head
8710 - Asdown MiBass 220
7975 - Ashdown MiBass 550 Bass Amp Head
9309 - Ashdown TE12 500H 12 Band Bass Head
9349 - Hartke HA2500 Bass Head
9027 - Hartke Kilo 1000 Bass Head
12382 - Hartke LH1000 Bass Head
10408 - MarkBass Bass MultiAmp Stereo
5675 - Mark Bass Little Mark 250 (250w)
5245 - Mark Bass Little Mark 800, 800W
6243 - Mark Bass Little Mark III Bass Head 500w
9035 - Markbass Little Mark III Tube Bass Head
5244 - MarkBass Little Mark Tube 800, 800W
5243 - Mark Bass SD1200, 1200W
7962 - Markbass TTE500 Randy Jackson Head
9256 - Markbass Big Bang 500W Bass Head
9250 - Markbass Classic 300 Head
9941 - Markbass Little Mark 250 Head Black
9249 - Markbass L Mark Rocker 500 Amp Head
9255 - Markbass Momark Modular Bass Systems
9944 - Markbass MultiAmp
9725 - Markbass TTE800 Randy JacksonHead
5652 - Marshall MB450H 450W
6618 - Marshall VBA400 Valve 400W
6261 - Orange AD200 MK3
8231 - Orange Dark Terror Valve Guitar Head
5242 - Orange TB1000 1000W Terror
5351 - Orange Terror Bass 500 TB500
5957 - Peavey Pro VB3 300W
5960 - Peavey Tour 450, 450W
5959 - Peavey Tour VB2 225W
5184 - TC Electronic RH450, 450W

Bass Cabinets

8733 - Ashdown 210T Deep Lite Bass Cab
6457 - Ashdown ABM115 Compact (1x15)
6456 - Ashdown ABM410H (4x10)
4376 - Ashdown ABM610 (6x10)
5677 - Ashdown ABM810 (8x10)
4394 - Ashdown CL115 Large (1x15)
4393 - Ashdown CL410H (4x10)
4392 - Ashdown CL414H Plus Horn (4x10)
4391 - Ashdown CL610 Tilt-Cab (6x10)
4390 - Ashdown CL810 (8x10)
6146 - Ashdown NEO115H Compact (1x15)
6452 - Ashdown MAG115 Deep (1x15)
6451 - Ashdown MAG210T Deep (2x10)
8754 - Ashdown MAG414T Deep Lite
8730 - Ashdown Mag 115 Deep Lite Bass Cab
8755 - Ashdown Mag410T Deep 4 x 10 Bass Cab
8756 - Ashdown Mag810T 8 x 10" Bass Cab
9315 - Ashdown Mi10 Bass Cab
9316 - Ashdown Mi12 Bass Cab
8692 - Ashdown VS112 125 1 x 12 Bass Cab
4379 - Ashdown VS115 200 (1x15)
8691 - Ashdown VS212 200 2 x 12 Bass Cab
8711 - Ashdown VS412 600 Bass Extension Cab
9007 - Hartke HCH112 Bass Cab
9292 - Hartke HCH410 Hydrive 410 Bass Cab
4766 - Mark Bass NY804 New York 804 (8 x 4)
6241 - Mark Bass STD102HF (2x10)
6242 - Mark Bass STD104HF (4x10)
5476 - Mark Bass STD104HR (4x10)
5477 - Mark Bass STD151HR (1x15)
9033 - Markbass Traveler 121H Bass Ext Cab
9034 - Markbass Traveler 151 P Bass Guitar Cab
4733 - Mark Bass Traveller TRV102P (2x10)
5431 - Mark Bass NY121 New York 1x 12 Bass Cab
10412 - Markbass NY122 2 x 12 Bass Cab
10409 - Markbass NY151 1 x 15 Bass Cab
10410 - Markbass NY151 RJ 1 x 15" Randy Jackson
10411 - Markbass NY604 Bass Cab
6767 - Marshall VBC412 (4x12)
6617 - Marshall VBC810 (8x10)
6259 - Orange OBC115 (1x15)
10266 - Orange OBC210 Bass Guitar Speaker Cab
6260 - Orange OBC410H (4x10)
5241 - Orange OBC810 (8x10)
5239 - Orange SP212 Smart Power Isobaric (2x12)
5238 - Orange SP410 Smart Power Isobaric (4x10)
6766 - Peavey 410TVX (4x10)
5182 - TC Electronic RS210 (2x10)
5181 - TC Electronic RS212 (2x12)
5180 - TC Electronic RS410 (4x10)



BLAST OFF

ROB 'BLASKO' NICHOLSON HAS PLAYED WITH THEM ALL – OZZY, DANZIG AND ROB ZOMBIE AMONG THEM. JOE DALY MEETS THE METAL MASTER

PICS: ANDREW STUART

There are those who approach music as a means to achieving an artistic end: men and women of uncommon creative vision who employ musical instruments as brushes for colouring the melodious soundscapes unfurling in their minds. And then there are the hired guns. This elite corps of players combine superior musicianship with a chameleon-like mastery of a genre or musical style, content to trade fame and notoriety for creative variety and a steady paycheck.

One of the busiest hired guns in rock is bassist Rob 'Blasko' Nicholson, the hard-charging side man from Southern California who has presided over the low end for the likes of Danzig, Rob Zombie and the legendary Ozzy Osbourne.

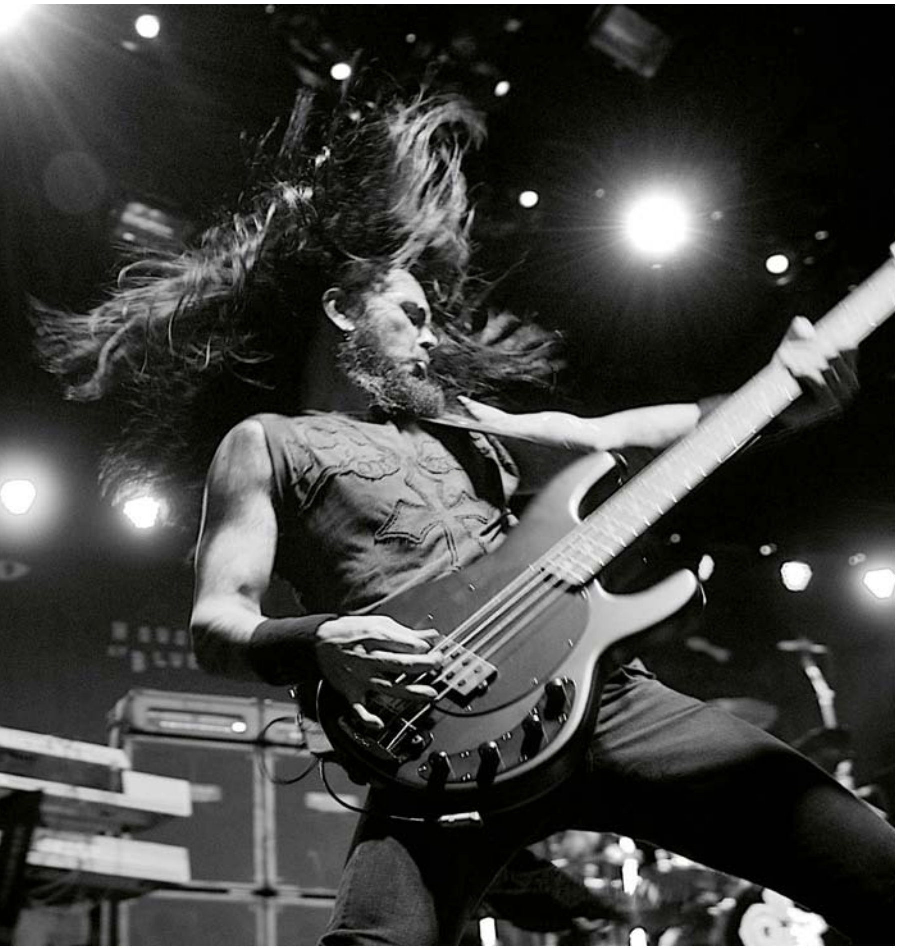
"In the 80s, when I started, the bass players were the cooler dudes, at least from my perspective," Blasko says. "Gene Simmons was spitting blood and fire; he was The Demon, and that really turned me on. When I first got into Kiss, I thought they were monsters or superheroes. It didn't register until later that those guys were musicians."

Unsurprisingly, when he began playing bass, Blasko gravitated towards those icons of the larger-than-life ilk, such as Lemmy, Sid Vicious and Nikki Sixx, although the music he ended up playing edged closer to the thrash metal explosion blowing down from San Francisco. By 1985 his playing advanced to the point where in order to reach the next level, he would need to choose between either a curriculum of focused study at a school such as LA's Musicians' Institute or the old-fashioned route: a baptism by fire.

For Blasko, there was no hesitation. "The music business is just about doing it. Anything you want to be, you just have to do it. Music schools can only go so far. Sure, you can learn modes and scales and the importance of technique, but if you want to be one of those people who puts out records and goes on tour and lives out of a suitcase, there's nothing that MI could teach you. Jaco Pastorius didn't go to MI, you know?"

Hooking up with an outfit called Cryptic Slaughter, Blasko was still in his teens when they cut their first demo and scored a deal with Metal Blade records in the mid-80s. Their muscular brew of hardcore and speed metal saw their full-length debut defeat even the grandest of expectations, and launched them onto their first tour of the United States. There were, of course, certain practical limitations: specifically, at that time, Blasko and his bandmates were still in high school. Too young to secure credit cards to rent vehicles and hotel rooms, and several years before the advent of the internet, the lads faced some unique challenges.

"Because we were so young," Blasko explains, "we had to have a parent rent a van for us. Then, because we didn't want to pay for mileage, we'd disconnect



later, the job remains his.

Blasko is quick to point out that a large part of his success stems from approaching each project with a clear understanding of what the artist needs and focusing his energies on playing that role. He explains, "I continue to get gigs because I'm not difficult and I'm not trying to bring in something that isn't being asked for. I can assess the situation pretty quickly and I can morph into whatever's needed. But some people don't really wrap their heads around the hired-gun role. They think they're an 'artist' and their value as an artist should be heard. I don't subscribe to that. Look, I'm proud to be a hired gun. I work with artists and I'm part of a grand vision that is the vision of the artist: I'm not trying to carve out my own thing. My role is to make the dude whose name is on the ticket kick ass. That's the job description."

A long-time veteran of Ernie Ball Music Man basses, Blasko uses Mesa Boogie amps and little else in the way of stage gear. Yet, while quick to point out that he is not a gearhead, Blasko's warm-up exercises see him using various apps, cables and software on his iPad or iPhone to run through the band's set before the show.

Given that he is someone who has shared the world's stages with some fairly influential musicians, you can't help but wonder if he has any more mountains to climb. "I'm dead serious that when Ozzy retires, I retire. He's the godfather of the music that I love and that's the reason that I do what I do, so I have no real reason to play elsewhere. However," he quickly clarifies, "if AC/DC ever needed a guy... Well, I suppose I'm at the end of a very long line of people with the last name Young to step in and do that gig!"

"I WORK WITH ARTISTS... I'M PART OF A GRAND VISION"

the odometer; of course, whenever you disconnect the odometer, you also disconnect the speedometer, so we never knew how fast we were driving! It was really fun but no cell phones, no computers... you used a pay phone when you could.

While nothing improves bass playing as thoroughly as non-stop touring, another benefit is the exposure to both fans and other bands. Cryptic Slaughter shared the same management company as White Zombie and Pantera, and they toured with Zombie on a number of occasions. During this time, as temporary bass vacancies opened in groups like Prong and Danzig, Blasko would fill in, but ultimately it would be joining Rob Zombie's band in the late 90s that would usher Blasko to the next echelon of music. Because he had seen Blasko play on the road, Zombie knew him to be a proven commodity.

"When Rob needed a bassist," Blasko explains, "it wasn't like, 'Rob Zombie needs a bass player; let's go hold auditions at MI'. That's not how that works. How it really works is that you market yourself, you brand yourself, you make yourself visible and people see you. That's how you get gigs."

Blasko played on three commercially successful albums with Rob Zombie and toured extensively with his band, including several engagements opening for Ozzy Osbourne. Having established himself as a richly talented and versatile player, Ozzy didn't think twice in 2003 when he found himself in need of a new bassist. Like Rob Zombie before him, Ozzy simply picked up the phone and called his number one option.

"I had been seen by Ozzy's camp out on tour," Blasko says, "and then one day Ozzy needed a bass player. We live in an age where you can showcase your talents shredding in your bedroom on YouTube and be found, but for me, the way I climbed the ranks of heavy metal rock bands was just by being visible – by getting out there and doing it." He met with Ozzy, ran through a few songs, and 10 years

When he's not holding down the rhythm for Ozzy, Blasko manages the mercurial rock upstarts, Black Veil Brides, and in true Blasko form, he's learning how to manage a band the same way he learned how to master the bass: by doing it. "Over the years I realised that you can tell an artist to do something or not to do something, but sometimes even if the stove is hot, they're going to touch it, and that's the way it is. The role of a manager is that we're problem solvers. There's rarely a phone call I get that's telling me how awesome I am. It's usually because I have to fix something."

While he stewards the careers of the white hot BVB, he plans to take a break from playing, barring certain extenuating circumstances. "The bass is in a case in a storage unit somewhere and it won't be seen until Ozzy Osbourne or Angus Young, gives me a call," he chuckles. In fact, we wouldn't bet against either. ■

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HEY JOE...

JOE BONAMASSA'S BASSIST CARMINE ROJAS BOASTS A LIST OF COLLABORATORS WHICH READS LIKE A HISTORY OF CLASSIC ROCK. JOE DALY DOFFS THE CAP

Carmine Rojas has worked with a jaw-dropping parade of music legends including Keith Richards, Eric Clapton, Peter Frampton, Stevie Ray Vaughan and Carlos Santana. He served as Rod Stewart's musical director and bass guitarist for 15 years, and he composed the most iconic bass-line of the 80s.

Back in the lo-fi paleolithic days of the 60s, the nascent art of radio programming focused on playing a wide variety of music. In those halcyon days of AM, disc jockeys spun a colourful spectrum of styles and stations routinely fitted bouncy Latin jams between smooth Motown R&B, stormy electric blues or even well-trodden jazz standards. It was the ongoing exposure to this bracing rhythmic brew that invested the journeyman bassist with a prodigious versatility, which would later earn him some of rock and roll's most prestigious gigs.

Recalling those early days from his modest rehearsal basement in Brooklyn, Carmine tells *Bass Guitar Magazine*, "I was learning songs by Steppenwolf and Santana and mostly the rock blues thing. To us it was normal to play Black Sabbath with Tito Puente and a Frank Sinatra tune. Everything seemed to have something to say to me."

Carmine launched his musical odyssey with a deep immersion in the catalogues of James Jamerson and Chuck Rainey, the reigning bass kings in America's burgeoning R&B scene, who had jump-started that movement with juicy melodies, lead guitar-style flourishes and a bawdy disregard for the staid repetition of traditional blues-based playing. It was the buzz across the pond, however, that suggested to Carmine a new framework for exploring the possibilities of bass guitar.

"As a kid," Carmine says, "Humble Pie, Traffic and Hendrix completely turned the whole thing around and opened up a whole new door. They were basically emulating what the American bass players were doing, but their interpretation of it was very cool, because they were very efficient, which I loved. At one moment I'd be into a band like War or Santana, then all of a sudden, Humble Pie releases *Live At The Fillmore*, and I'm thinking, 'Wow! Listen to that big-ass bass!'"

Among that new class of 60s bassmen, none surprised Carmine more than Ronnie Wood, then of the Jeff Beck Group. "Woody is an incredible bassist," he says. "Because of him I got a Tele bass when I was a kid, but I didn't realise I had to go through Hi-Watt amps and Marshall amps and guitar gear to get that rattle. But I did learn how to play with a pick, which got me closer to that rattle sound. It was a unique sound that you'd hear from him, Paul McCartney and Chris Squire

– that tonality, like you were playing with nickel or a plate against the string. It inspired me to put that into the Santana approach, and then I put the Santana approach into the rock approach. I always mix my stuff around because that's just the way I would hear things. Then I could work anywhere, because I had all kinds of interpretations into my head about how I could adapt a bass-line into a part in the studio."

Success as a professional hinges on more than a mastery of scales and techniques: "I'd say the top qualities would be discipline, professionalism and your social skills, because you could be a great player, but you could be an asshole – and if you are, you won't work anywhere. People will say, 'I can't hire him because he's a pain in the ass'."

One of the many reasons that Carmine enjoys such high regard among producers is his unique approach to contributing ideas to a project. "I give the producer five different bass-lines and say, 'Here, pick which one you think is closest to your concept of this song'. I'll come in and do a session with somebody and they'll ask, 'How do you hear this song?' and I'll tell them, 'Here are five different ways, but you pick the one that fits most closely with your perspective'. I like giving them choices like that, because then you feel like you're being utilised correctly."

In the early 80s, David Bowie was looking to make a comeback. No longer the strangest-looking cat in music and seeing many of his contemporaries strike out in trendy new directions, the Thin White Duke understood that he needed to come out with a different kind of vibe. The problem was, he wasn't sure how that vibe might sound. Scouting the clubs of New York City, he compiled a shortlist of the musicians who might breathe life into his vision, and while Bowie and producer Nile Rogers initially tapped five different bassists for what became the massively successful *Let's Dance* album in 1983, ultimately Carmine played on every track but one. Among Carmine's contributions to that project was one of the most recognisable bass-lines of the decade.

"I reinvented the bass-line of 'China Girl'," Carmine explains, "because the original Iggy Pop song had no bass-line in it – it just had root notes. So I invented the hook by emulating something I had heard a few days before by Brian Jones from the Stones, playing vibes on 'Under My Thumb'. The chord changes are the same – E, D, C – and when I was trying to figure out what he was doing, I remembered part of the lick, so I turned that lick around and put the bass-line in it so that it would link

"JOE TAKES ME BACK TO MY ORIGINAL STUFF FROM THE JEFF BECK DAYS, FROM THE HUMBLE PIE DAYS, THE RORY GALLAGHER DAYS, THE ENGLISH GUITAR DAYS"

up evenly all the way to the end. It definitely makes the song great, although I'm not sure Iggy would be happy about it!"

For six years now Carmine has been playing with blues wizard Joe Bonamassa, whose meat-and-potatoes attack has brought Carmine back full-circle to his roots. "Joe takes me back to my original stuff from the Jeff Beck days, from the Humble Pie days, the Rory Gallagher days, the English guitar days. He doesn't shred and he doesn't do any tricks: he just plays. You don't have too many guys out there like that. They're playing through pedalboards and stacks of gear. Joe just plays into a straight amp and blows everybody away."

When producer Kevin Shirley first reached out to Carmine to play with Bonamassa, the implicit understanding was that their ambitions would reach beyond forming just another blues band. Shirley's concept required a new team of people: the kind of seasoned pros who might inspire Bonamassa to play a bit differently than before. More bluntly, they didn't want the guitarist to ever get too comfortable on his feet.

"No offence to the Kenny Wayne Shepherds and the Johnny Langs," says Carmine, "who we all really like – but these guys are playing traditional blues, which we could do, but everybody else is doing it, so why should we? Leave the interpretation open so it sounds more like an English rock band. Like bringing the English rock stuff back to the Americans, and the Americans bringing the rock stuff back to the English. Everything we do has a sort of edge to it, because there's a fire. You've got bands like the Stones, and they can sound great in a small club, but us, we're perfect in a theatre. We don't want to go past five thousand people though, because then you're losing the closeness of the fans."

That focus on the fans and on engaging the audience continues to inspire Carmine on a daily basis, 50 years since he first started running scales in his Brooklyn basement. "We always go in for the kill," he says. "We treat every show as the first or last show of the tour, and that's why we have so many people coming back – because we take no prisoners, and you can see that we love what we do." ■

Carmine can be heard on Joe Bonamassa's Tour De Force DVD and Blu-ray series, available now. Info: www.jbonamassa.com.

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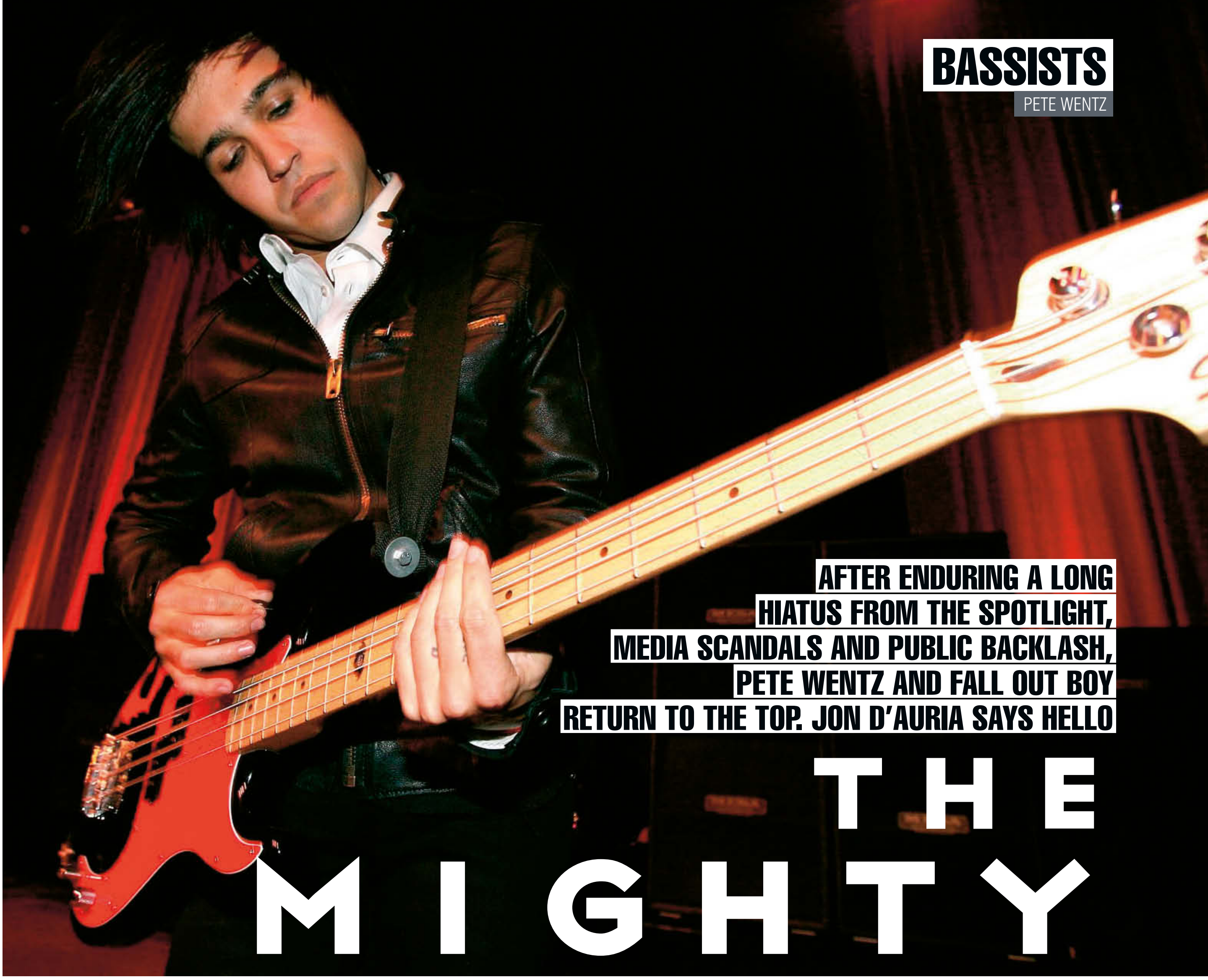


AFTER ENDURING A LONG HIATUS FROM THE SPOTLIGHT, MEDIA SCANDALS AND PUBLIC BACKLASH, PETE WENTZ AND FALL OUT BOY RETURN TO THE TOP. JON D'AURIA SAYS HELLO

THE MIGHTY FALL

"It was a really tough period for all of us, and we really didn't know if a reunion would ever happen and we thought that maybe that was it for Fall Out Boy. I had to make peace with it at the time, but with everything we were going through it was a definite possibility."

Pete Wentz sits backstage at the Bayou Music Center in Houston, Texas, awaiting sound check before one of the first batch of shows on the tour that broke Fall Out Boy's four-year hiatus. He seems refreshed and enlivened to be on the road again and his contentment to be back is barely hidden behind his openness to answering questions about his past.

While Wentz's public image has taken numerous hits in the past, it seems that a break from the spotlight has humbled the 34-year-old bass player and given him a new perspective on life while relighting his fire towards music. "You don't know if the magic is still going to be there when you return to something, so there was a lot of anxiety about it,' reflects Wentz. 'When you start on anything – whether it's a new relationship, a new adventure or a big change, there's always excitement around it that can overpower the anxiety and that definitely happened in this case. In the end, it just felt good to be back with my band."

After four years of solo projects, side bands and soul searching, the members of Fall Out Boy decided it was time to pick up where they left off with 2008's *Folie à Deux*, rekindling their relationships both on and off the stage. The band enlisted producer Butch Walker and decided to approach their song writing with a fresh approach that broke the mould from their previous efforts.

"When we figured out that we were coming back, we started sending songs back and forth and it became all about the music at that point, but we wanted to try different methods of writing, both individually and together in the same room," says Wentz. "We knew it was what we wanted to do again and we were all on a similar page of being focused and in the zone."

The resulting session led to their fifth studio album titled *Save Rock and Roll*. The album exhibits many pop sensibilities to it, while still mixing in the band's influences of alternative and punk music. Wentz proves that not only did his personality change over the hiatus, but also his bass playing, as the record shows an evolution of his writing skills.

"I usually always come up with my lines on the spot, but I like to try a bunch of options before I commit to anything," says Wentz. "Patrick [Stump, guitarist] really makes the musical bed, so it makes it easy for me to write on top of his riffs. I really just try to listen to the song and hear what it needs from the bass. Sometimes it doesn't need much, and sometimes it just needs a fill here or there. One of the most important parts of making art or being in a band is knowing your place and what your role is and how you can contribute in the best way possible to greater whole. That's a big part of a being a bassist."

"THERE ARE BASSISTS THAT I LOVE LIKE FLEA OR CLIFF BURTON, WHO ARE INSANE PLAYERS AND THEY DO IT ALL WITH THEIR FINGERS"

Wentz also put more focus than ever into his tonality on the new record, which features more distortion, fuzz and overdrive than he had used before on the preceding material. While Fall Out Boy may not come to mind as a heavy band by today's standards, Wentz was able to conjure some respectable dirty tones this time around.

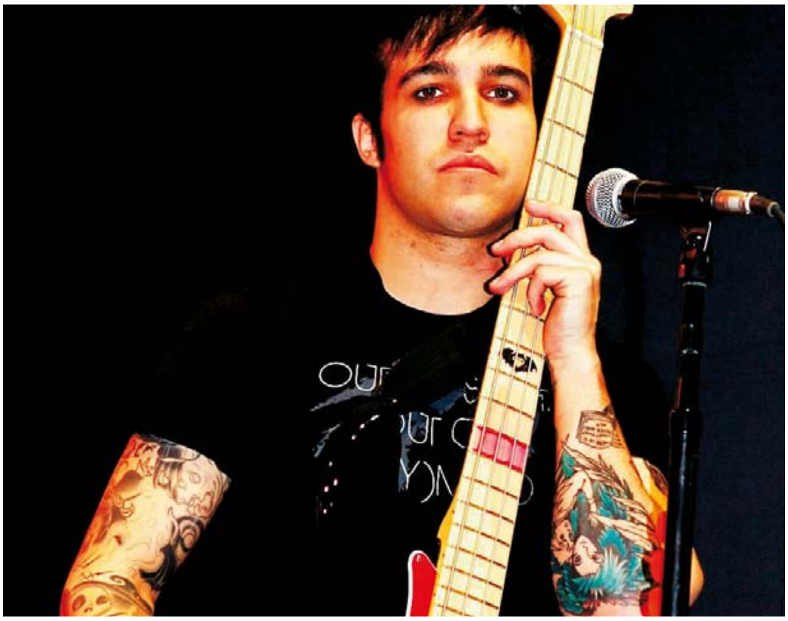
"We ended up having to cut the bass parts live and we used a few different pedals to get the tone I wanted," says Wentz. "I used a SansAmp DI and a Big Muff to get the overdriven sound on there. That's been a fun thing to figure out how to replicate it live and I've been using a Big Muff and an octave pedal to try to capture that sound on stage. Some parts on the songs needed more room for the guitars, so we'd use overdrive to give it a low heaviness."

Songs like 'Miss Missing You', 'Where Did The Party Go' and 'Alone Together' stand out as Wentz's most driving tracks on the album that show his maturation from the band's earlier recordings. Wentz explains that the band used to aspire to make 'perfect' albums with artificially gridded bass and drums, but he now finds beauty in the imperfections and evolution of his playing.

"When we first started playing together, I wanted to play as fast and as loud as I possibly could. I wanted my bass to have a metallic, robotic sound to it and you can hear that on our first album. It's not an overdriven tone, but it's super gridded out," says Wentz. "I've also been accepting the rule that I'm playing bass and it's not just a guitar with four strings. I'm part of the rhythm section and more than ever, I'm focusing on how to make myself better in that role. Working with the metronome and trying new ideas in the studio has really enhanced my playing. I've learned that I don't need to lock myself in one box that defines my playing."

Watching Wentz play through the new material on stage reveals new-found attention to detail, gained during the band's hiatus, when he would sit with a metronome to work on his strumming patterns and technique. While he has always been a pick player on the bass, he now uses his pick to drive his tone more than ever, whereas before it was simply his preferred mode of playing.

"There are bassists that I love like Flea or Cliff Burton, who are insane players and they do it all with their fingers. I really got into heavy bands where they used picks because the music was so fast, but now I know that fast lines can be done with fingers," says Wentz. "I developed a weird carpal problem with my right arm towards the end of our last tour before the hiatus, and I thought about learning all of our songs with my fingers, but it's a weird thing to try to get used to when you're so comfortable playing a certain way for so long. At that point it's all muscle memory and it's like learning how to throw with your left arm being a righty."



With a triumphant return to music riding on a well-received album that sits atop the billboard charts and a new redesigned signature Fender bass due out in 2014, Wentz feels better than he has for a long time. Ignoring the criticism and adversity that seems to follow him while writing the next chapter for himself and his band, he reflects on his journey and offers up some advice to young bass players who want to follow in his path.

"I would say a couple of things to someone trying to get to my position: first of all, if you're just in this for the money and the perks that come with it, there are probably easier ways for you to go about getting that than playing bass and trying to make it big in a band. But if it is something you're passionate about, and you love it, and you do it every day because something drives you, and you love your band and just want to make music with them, then you should never take no for an answer. Give everyone you see your demo, and push for it more than you've pushed for anything. If we listened to anyone who said we were no good and didn't have any potential, then we would've been done long ago." ■

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GIBSON EB

Redesigned, resurfaced and ready to roll, Gibson's new EB meets the ultimate road test courtesy of Duff Battye

It's fair to say: think Gibson and think guitars... of the six string variety. The likes of the Les Paul, SG and the ES-335 are iconic. The guitar-manufacturing giant's basses often seem an afterthought. True, there is the Thunderbird (as played by Nikki Sixx) and RD (belonging to Krist Novoselic), but often Gibson basses can seem fairly one-dimensional. You suspect with that it is with this in mind they have released the EB Bass. With a funky body redesign, based on a SG style body, the basses are available in Natural Satin, Satin Ebony, Satin Cream and Satin Fireburst, and they're also available left-handed. Let's give it a go...

BUILD QUALITY

The first impression on removing the natural satin test model from its Gibson case is how chunky and solid the bass feels. For a mid-price bass it looks likes something far more expensive, and classy. Some of the alternate Gibson basses can feel very weighty and in some cases unbalanced, but the EB feels so light and the radical design sits well on strap or knee. I wonder if this was a very deliberate ploy – to offer something unique in the Gibson bass guitar range; something more practical to take on the all-conquering Precision-style bodies.

The EB features a solid ash body with a glued-in maple neck. The neck has a very comely rounded profile, measuring .800" at the first fret and .900" at the 12th, and is topped with a 34" scale rosewood fingerboard with 20 frets. The double-cutaway body and unusual body shape gives the bass a unique look – equally at home with the rock, indie, blues or funk fraternity. The innovative body is nicely offset by the reassuring Gibson headstock with 2/2 style machine heads. The tuners supplied are Grover and are practical, if uninspiring.

Two volume, one tone and jack inputs are on the main body of the guitar. One minor gripe would be that in comparison to the rest of the build the control pots look and feel cheap. I wonder how well they would stand up to consistent abuse, and how long before they popped off. I suspect Gibson had to make savings somewhere in order to actually make any money from a bass as versatile as this. The hefty red tortoiseshell scratchplate works well with the natural finish on test, and the build quality as a whole feels very solid.

SOUNDS AND PLAYABILITY

With a lighter bass, you sometimes worry about how the body weight will affect its tonal range. The EB doesn't suffer from any of this. The ash body – a wood renowned for its tonal quality – literally booms out the low-end tones with a classic Gibson rumble. But with a lighter touch, or pick work higher up the fretboard, the bass displays some really velvety, clear tones. Gibson claim that this tonal strength and depth comes from the two new Jim Decola-designed pickups that come as standard on the EB. The pickups are the Music Man-style HH as opposed to the Fender split J or P pickups. Having played the

CONTACT DETAILS

Gibson
www.gibson.com

bass through both a full live rig and also a small practice set-up, I would agree that the tonal options are excellent. The forward pickup rolls out a deep throaty rumble, while the back allows for clear attack and punch. You could easily provide the backing to a rock band, or slap and pluck for a brighter funk sound. For anyone familiar with Gibson basses, the high-end clarity will be a surprise – this is a bass that would easily cope with intricate lead style work.

As I mentioned before, the lightness of the instrument makes it a joy to wield, and it seems to sit well wherever you play it. The fretboard is nicely put together and allows you to glide up and down the neck. It's a quick neck that inspires you to pull out Billy Sheehan-style runs – although, sadly in my case, with limited results. The cutaway body means you can actually get to the high end frets with ease (something many bass designers seem to forget) and the factory set-up action is low with no apparent fret buzz. This is a genuinely player-friendly bass guitar.

CONCLUSION

If Gibson were aiming for a mix of classic looks with contemporary styling then they have succeeded. The EB feels and looks lovely, and certainly belies its relatively modest sub-£800 pricetag. Barring the slightly cheap-looking controls, the bass feels like a heavyweight – without the weight. Looks aside, tonally the bass is a revelation. The low-end rumble so loved by Gibson bass players is there in abundance, but the pickup/body/neck combo also allow this bass to be much more than a 4/4 low-end driver. The combination of ash body and maple neck works well and looks great too. While the styling may look Fender-ish to some, that may be no bad thing: perhaps Gibson have developed a bass that will finally draw fans of the Jazz and Precision onto a new model. ■

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

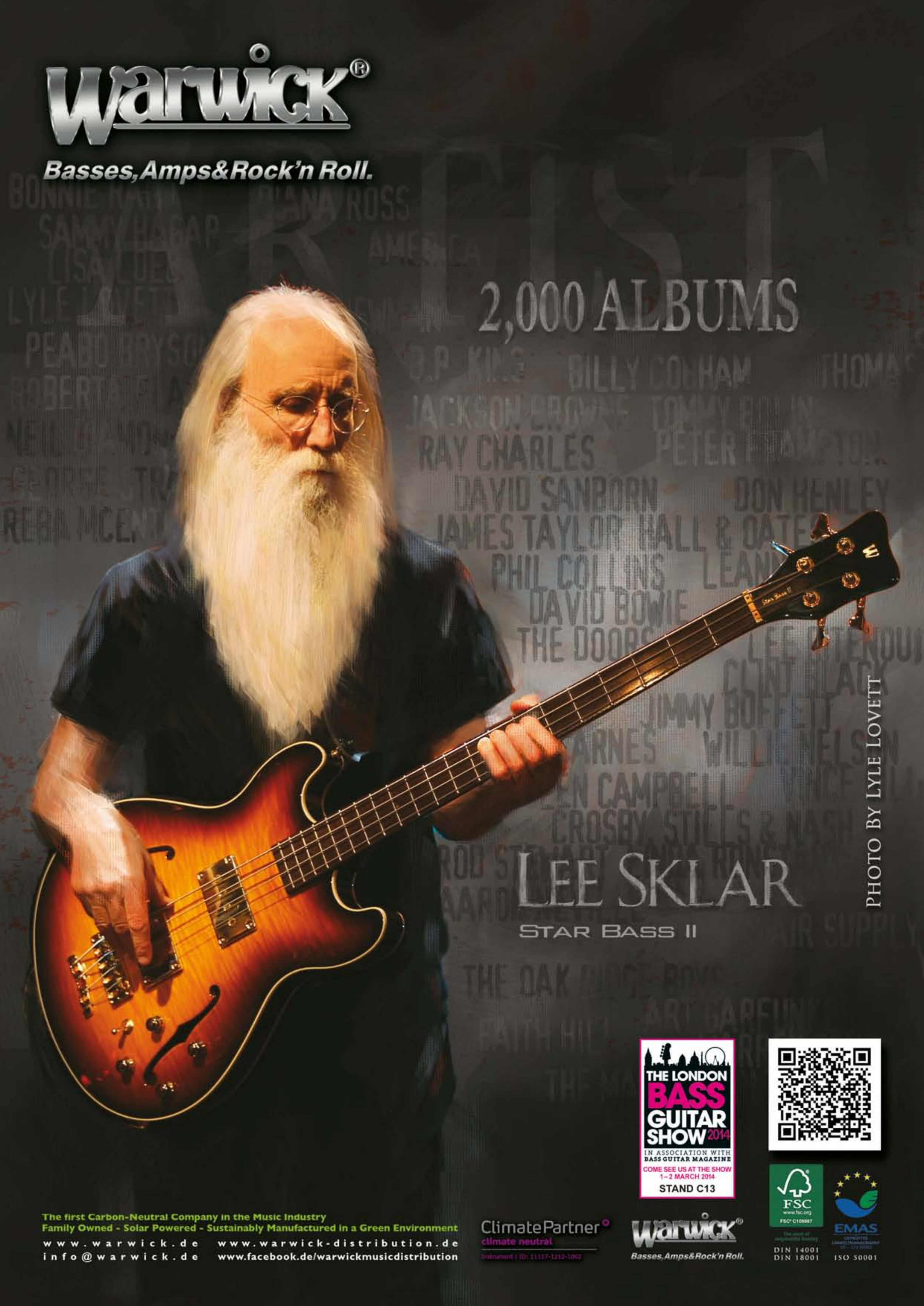
PRICE | £759
MADE IN | USA
BODY | Ash
NECK | Maple
SCALE | 34"
FINGERBOARD | Rosewood
PICKUPS | 2 x coil-tapped humbuckers
BRIDGE | Babicz
TUNERS | Grover
WEIGHT | 3kg
LEFTIE AVAILABLE? | Yes

WHAT WE THINK

PLUS | Competitively priced, great build quality
MINUS | Cheap-looking controls
OVERALL | Oodles of character, with a full sound, for £759 this is an absolute steal

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY	7/10 stars
SOUND QUALITY	8/10 stars
VALUE	9/10 stars



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Alpha male Joel Graham does battle with this denizen of the deep. Who wins?

Many of us believe that the United Kingdom manufactures nothing any more, and that everything we now purchase is imported and built elsewhere, from clothes to cars. This attitude seems to go even further when it comes to musical instruments. Well, let's put that myth to rest shall we? Handmade musical instrument workshops are popping up from the north of Scotland to Brighton, where immense talents behind the design and craftsmanship of these instruments can be found – and if you want a shining example of this, here it is. Bassists everywhere, I present the Mako Custom, by the exceedingly talented Saltaire-based Alpher company.

BUILD QUALITY

Initial impressions on seeing the Mako on display are of instant excitement for this bass, no matter what else is racked next to it. Its clean-cut, natural wood body draws in your eyes and sends any other guitars sharing its space into your peripheral vision. Only then will you start to analyse the genius details that can only be found on a handmade bass of this quality.

Starting with the body wood, which is a piece of swamp ash with a walnut top and wenge separating veneer, it's clear that the guys at Alpher like their wood. Judging by the quality of the Mako, they must scrutinise their choices and supply as expertly as a high-end cabinet maker. Everything about the body wood is perfect to the eye, including the grain, the colour and the finish. The shape nods towards the classic Jaguar bass, albeit with a much more modern twist. A mako is a species of shark, as keen ichthyologists will know, and I can totally see the inspiration behind the name of this model: sleek, smooth and cleanly shaped, it certainly fits the name.

Built into the body are a humbucker and a single coil Wizard pickup, wired up to a John East two-band preamp. The four controls feature a volume (push/pull for active/passive), pickup pan, bass and treble. Finally the body is topped off with a Hipshot type A bridge. The neck is bolted on with six heavy black countersunk Allen key bolt screws. The join between the neck and body on the rear of the bass is wonderfully contoured and shaped, allowing for really easy high fret access. The neck itself is also wenge

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

PRICE | £1995
MADE IN | UK
BODY | English walnut/swamp ash
FINISH | Natural, oiled
NECK | Wenge
FRETS | 21
FINGERBOARD | Ebony
PICKUPS | 1x Wizard single coil, 1x Wizard humbucker
ELECTRONICS | Passive/active, dual filter preamp
CONTROLS | Volume (push/pull active/passive), pan, bass, treble

WHAT WE THINK

PLUS | Outstanding playability and tone range
MINUS | Lots of competition at this price point
OVERALL | An utterly wonderful bass guitar: buy with confidence

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY	★★★★★★★★★★
SOUND QUALITY	★★★★★★★★★★
VALUE	★★★★★★★★☆☆

with an ebony fingerboard. Aluminium dot markers adorn the edge of the 21 slim frets for guidance. Atop the neck sits a tastefully designed headstock, matching the body beautifully. Hipshot Resolite tuners line the headstock, angled towards the player for easy tuning, preventing the usual wrestle with the bass mid-song if you go a little flat.

In a clever move, the same style of screws that join the neck to the body are also utilised as strap buttons themselves. Nipping them tight with an Allen key to inner-threaded studs that are fixed into the body in the usual strap-button positions, you can be sure of pulling some shapes in the live environment without fear of the bass dropping to the ground. No need to invest in additional locking equipment. Equally impressive is the back plate that houses the battery. No tiny screws to fiddle around with on this beast: there is a strong magnetic edge holding the back plate in place to the body. Simply place a finger in the recess and pop it off, making any change of battery mid-set much quicker.

SOUNDS AND PLAYABILITY

Despite its heavy appearance, the Mako is on the lighter side, making it ideal for both playing seated and standing. Its playability is just fantastic. The neck is very fast, with its narrow width at the nut and access to the higher frets made easy due to the aforementioned shaping of the rear of the body.

The Mako almost begs to be worn lower then convention dictates, due to its bad-ass body shape. Whether you're utilising a pick, fingers or slapping, there is plenty of space over the whole body for comfort in any style. The body doesn't force your picking hand to any particular area, unlike other high-end instruments. Adaptability and versatility are, in my opinion, the key criteria when investing in any instrument and there are no barriers to either here.

The controls also give the bass huge tonal variety, from a rumbling dirty tone trough to bell-like clarity. The bass controls alone produce a huge range when playing it via an amp with a flat EQ: not once did I have to touch the amp to get great sounds.

CONCLUSION

There is no reason not to want to own this bass. Everything about it is top-notch. Sure, the £1995 pricetag doesn't make it instantly available to every player out there, but considering the workmanship, it's worth every last penny. From the overall look to its playability to the sound it delivers, there is nothing I can find to criticise about this wonderful instrument.

With basses of this quality emerging from the United Kingdom, we should all have renewed faith that top-quality manufacturing of musical instruments is on the increase. The workmanship, knowledge and expertise that has gone into the Mako Custom prove that maybe we're close to a point in time where homegrown bass-making may just be the best it's ever been. ■

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ORTEGA LIZZY BASS UKULELES

"When I'm cleaning windows!" warbles Joel McIver, faced with two pricey bass ukes

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Ukeleles will never shed their comedy image, in this country anyway. There's just too much George Formby-esque amusement to be derived from their tiny dimensions, although let us state for the record that the Ukelele Orchestra of Great Britain is a marvellous thing. But perhaps it's time to move forward a bit and let your prejudices fall away. At close to £500 each, these Ortegas, one fretted and one fretless, are clearly intended for serious musicians. Let's see if they do the trick, shall we?

BUILD QUALITY

You may have had a go on a ukelele at some point, perhaps at a festival where a man called Moonchild with an amusing hat is trying to sell you one for a tenner. Avoid these things: they break if you look at them and you can't tune them because the machine heads are always too weak to keep the strings in tune. What this teaches us is that, just like full-size instruments, a ukelele needs to have high-quality hardware or you'll want to smash it to pieces five minutes after you get it out of the box.

> "YOU CAN'T SLAP IT. YOU CAN'T TAP IT. YOU'D BE MAD TO PLAY IT IN A FUNK, METAL OR HARD ROCK BAND"

Having had my fingers burned a few times at festivals in the way I mention above (I blame the cider), the first thing I did when pulling the Lizzys out of their impressively solid gig bags was tune them up. Fortunately, the machine heads seem totally solid. It's the strings that will leave you feeling slightly uneasy. Made of a white plastic material and of some huge gauge that defies description, they have a rubbery feel that will unnerve people who have a phobia about earthworms.

The body is light and slightly head-heavy, although not so much that it's a problem. The battery compartment pops out

ORTEGA LIZZY-BS-GB AND LIZZY-BSFL-GB FRETTED AND FRETLESS BASS UKULELES PRICE **£465**

next to the jack socket and requires two circular batteries for the pickup system, a splendid thing that we will come to shortly. The neck is surprisingly fast for its scale and the string material and everything mechanical seems to be trimmed and assembled with extreme care. That said, I'd expect nothing else at this price.

PLAYABILITY AND SOUNDS

You'll need to adjust your playing style to get the best out of either Lizzy uke. The small dimensions of the instrument mean that both your fretting and picking hands will have to traverse smaller distances precisely to make the thing sound any good, but that's obvious. What's less evident at first glance is the fret height (negligible), the action (medium high) and the strings themselves, whose vast girth requires some care on your part when it comes to fretting. The fact that they're plastic, and therefore far from frictionless, means that string-bending and any significant vibrato techniques are out: essentially they 'stick' to the fingerboard. Be warned. The good news is that these necks are very playable, even shreddy if you're a legato player: you'll have a lot of fast-fingered fun as long as you stay down the low end.

Whatever Ortega has stuck under the bonnet of the Lizzys, it's a beast. Its Magusake system (for that is its name, grasshopper) has huge amounts of bass. Tweak the EQ on the body top and you'll be rewarded with a surprisingly massive low end. The mid boost is impressive too, although given the string material, the treble boost is far less so. A tuner and battery LED indicator add great value to this slightly curious instrument.

CONCLUSION

Look, who is the Lizzy aimed at? You can't slap it. You can't tap it. You'd be mad to play it in a funk, metal or hard rock band. However, folk, blues and classical uke players will love its dulcet tones and enormous bottom end. It would be perfect in an acoustic pop outfit or perhaps a jazz trio. I can even stretch my imagination to the point where a Lizzy would complement a soul or R&B band because of its tone range. If any of this sounds like you, dive right in. The quality is excellent and the sounds impressive. Everyone else will make yet another George Formby joke. ■

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

PRICE | £465
BODY | Mahogany
FINISH | Natural
NECK | Mahogany, two-way truss rod
FINGERBOARD | Rosewood
FRETS | 15 (fretted)
ELECTRONICS | Ortega Magusake system
STRINGS | Aquila Thundercut
BRIDGE | Ukebass
TUNERS | Ortega
NUT WIDTH | 45mm
SCALE | 20"
WEIGHT | 1.2kg
COMES WITH GIG BAG? | Yes

WHAT WE THINK

PLUS | Excellent build and tone range
MINUS | Strings are just weird
OVERALL | A curio that uke players may just grow to love

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY ★★★★★★★★★☆
SOUND QUALITY ★★★★★★★★☆☆
VALUE ★★★★★★★☆☆☆

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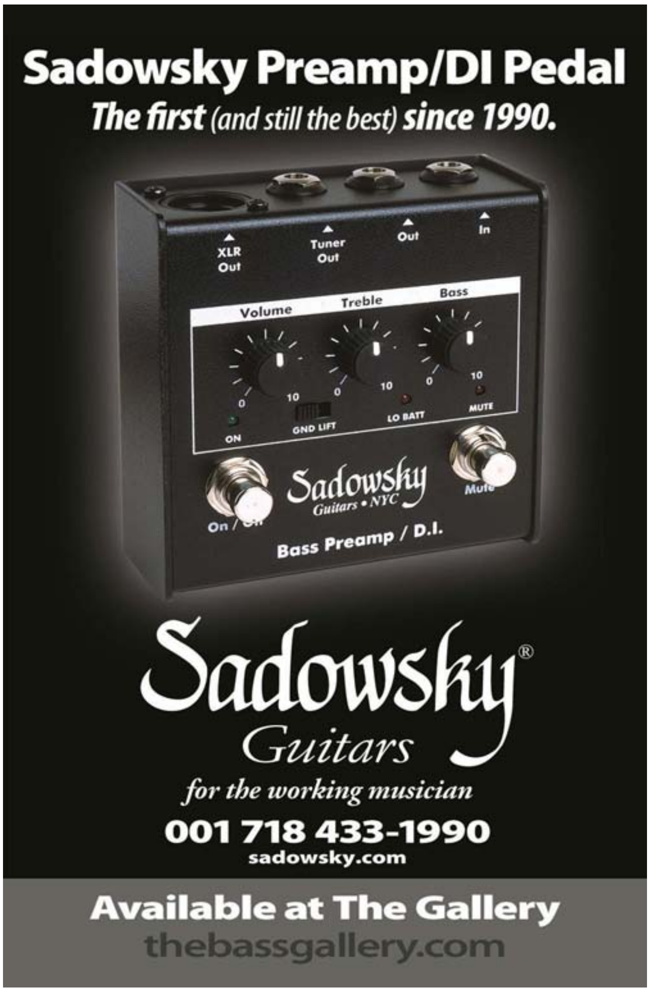
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MESA BOOGIE BASS PRODIGY FOUR:88

Dave Clarke takes the first look at Mesa's new bad boy

In all my years as a bassist, only occasionally has my aching back been spared by the luxury of a willing roadie. This has meant that the pursuit of my dream bass sound has often been less than thrilling, largely due to accumulated hours spent dragging, pushing and lifting awkward and heavy bass related equipment from A to B. Mercifully, as has been well documented within the pages of *BGM*, the size and weight of those pesky cabs, amps and combos has been decreasing in recent years. Micro amps, of which there are some real superstars on the market, have been welcomed with open arms by many bassists, who simply crave an easier gig. I freely admit to being one of those players, enjoying technology's convenient advancement. However, I'm also a total sucker for a fat-as-America bass sound – and that means I'm talking tubes, and all the warmth and feel that comes with them. But that has also invariably meant having to deal with substantial size and weight issues, which can be a real drag, man.

So what we need is someone like California's Mesa Boogie to come up with a massive-sounding tube amp about 7½" in height, 16¼" wide and 9½" deep, weighing less than 30 pounds and named the Bass Prodigy Four:88. They just have, you say? Nice.

BUILD AND FEATURES

As I was lifting this potential dreams-come-true-maker from its box, I remember thinking to myself that anyone complaining that the Bass Prodigy's 29 pounds is still 'a bit too heavy' simply needs to man up. I'm not the only one out there with first-hand experience of lifting Mesa Boogie amps, and rarely have they been anything other than the weight of Jupiter. In this respect, 29 pounds is a revelation. Make no mistake, this isn't anything like one of those diminutive Class D solid-state micro amps. This is an extremely powerful all-tube bass amp head.

Aesthetically, the Bass Prodigy looks stunning. Once switched-on, a team of blue LEDs illuminate the front panel and grill to form a striking contrast against the valves, visible through the rear grill, glowing in rock and roll's favourite shades of orange. It's a slight disappointment, though, that switching the amp on isn't accompanied by the same sound made by the Ghostbusters firing up their nuclear proton guns. Such a sound would befit this awesome-looking unit (note to Mesa Boogie: do it!). Standing on four chunky rubber feet, the amp also has a simple carrying handle, housed inside the body and easily accessed.

So what's under the hood? Well, the Bass Prodigy Four:88 has a tube power amp and preamp, featuring four KT88 power tubes and three 12AX7 preamp tubes. The Class A/B Multi-Watt power amp provides

CONTACT DETAILS

Westside Distribution
www.westsidedistribution.com

MESA BOOGIE BASS PRODIGY FOUR:88 PRICE **£1850**

two power options via a full/half power switch: four power tubes producing 250 tube-watts, or two tubes producing 125 tube-watts. At this point I'm obliged to point out that tube-watts are really, really loud, like solid-state-watts on steroids, which is very handy for quieter situations, allowing the user to make full use of the amp's tube tones and warmth.

The amp's front panel features an adjustable bias control with an LED indicator to accommodate wider tolerances found in the KT88 power tubes, a jack input that has a three-way select switch for active, normal and bright, while the all-tube preamp features gain, active bass, passive mids, active treble, a five-position active voice switch and master volume controls. In addition, there is also a DI level control and a solo level control for the optional Prodigy footswitch, and tip-to-ground, on/off or latching footswitches.

Alongside the power and standby switches, the front panel's controls are completed by a mute switch, ground lift, pre/post select and silent record, which allows direct preamp output from the Balanced XLR located on the rear panel, without the need for a speaker cabinet, allowing full use of the amp's qualities when recording, without having to disturb anyone within a three-mile radius.

The rear panel also features a DI out socket, footswitch socket, a tuner output jack, FX loop send and return jacks, slave out and three 1/4" speaker output jacks (1x8 ohm and 2x4 ohm). Perhaps surprisingly, there is no Speakon socket, but with Mesa Boogie's aim to create a portable tube amp there probably wasn't room.

Got all that? Great. Nurse, pass the Stingray...

SOUND QUALITY

With the EQ controls set at noon and the gain set at 11 o'clock, from the moment I plugged in I had a killer sound. To my delight, within another minute or so I had dialled in the sound that's been residing in my head for years, filed under 'My Perfect Bass Sound'. Trust me, no Class D solid-state amp I've ever tried has sounded this good. Then again, we are dealing with tubes here (I know, I know – what did I expect?) but, still, this was off-the-scale good and, metaphorically speaking, capable of inducing in this bassist a plump middle wicket. *(I say, steady on old boy – Ed)*

As you'd expect from a Mesa Boogie amp, the Bass Prodigy has more headroom than you can shake a stick at, and with the master volume set at 9 o'clock I was already moving a lot of air. Just a few degrees more on the dial and I thought my diaphragm was going to collapse! Hopefully, we've established that this amp head is very loud.

However, sheer volume is far from everything and, thankfully, the most pleasing aspect of the Bass Prodigy is its truly wonderful depth, warmth and clarity of tone, of which there is an abundance. Whether I was playing with my fingers, slapping or using a pick, the Prodigy delivered a full, rounded and satisfying sound every time. Further dynamics are aided by the pleasingly effective five-position voice switch, which enhances and emphasises your EQ sweeps. If desired, adding more gain serves to overdrive the tubes to suit, instantly evoking the spirit of many of my all-time favourite albums, all of which were made in the days when amps of this size, power and look were still the stuff of science fiction.

At this point a friend who had joined me for the evening took his enjoyment a step further by placing his head right up against my cab's speakers while I did my best attempt at a medley of Bernard Edwards' basslines. Sadly, his response was unprintable in a family magazine such as *BGM*.

CONCLUSION

There's been a lot of anticipation around Mesa Boogie's Bass Prodigy, and I'm delighted to conclude that it really does live up to expectation. It's a truly awesome bass head, with wonderful tones that sound warmer than a desert storm and fatter than a sumo wrestler, while retaining clarity and definition to die for. However, with the pursuit of my personal perfect sound seemingly at an end, there is a catch: the pricetag. It's a sobering thought that to own a Bass Prodigy you're going to need to part with a hefty £1850, which is prohibitive for the majority of bassists, myself included. After recently spending my bass budget on an expensive custom job, it'll be some time before I've saved the necessary Hovis to purchase one of these. Until then, I can at least take solace in the memory of what was a hell of a one-night stand with the Bass Prodigy. If you're at the London Bass Guitar Show in March, make a point of heading to the Mesa Boogie stand, where the exact model you're reading about will be on display for you to try for yourselves. ■

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

PRICE | £1850
MADE IN | USA
POWER | Output 4 tubes at 250watts or 2 tubes at 125watts
WEIGHT | 29lbs
DIMENSIONS | 7½" H x 16¼ W x 9½ D

WHAT WE THINK

PLUS | A truly superb portable tube amp. Tones to die for
MINUS | Prohibitive price tag. No Speakon socket
OVERALL | A triumph!

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY ★★★★★★★★★☆
SOUND QUALITY ★★★★★★★★★★
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MOOER BASS DISTORTION

Small is the new big, says Joel McIver, particularly if you're looking for big fuzz tones at recession-proof prices

Amps, basses, pedals, they're all getting smaller lately. In fact, here at *BGM* Towers we have an almost unhealthy fixation on how much bass gear can reduce in size before, like the unfortunate fellow in *The Incredible Shrinking Man*, they vanish completely. This is what happens when you spend the entire 80s and 90s lugging massive instruments and cabs up and down club stairs, enriching your local osteopath in doing so. Small is good in the bass world, believe us.

And when it comes to distortion pedals, it's hard to picture any pedal getting much smaller than Mooer's new Thunderball. Perhaps unwisely, they've given it a black case, making it a touch tricky to see through the dry ice on stage when you play Madison Square Garden, although the white text and controls should stand out clearly enough. The main control, the rotary gain pot at front and centre, is the main focus of your attention, as well as the tone and volume controls for fine tweaking. Apart from a choice of fuzz or distortion modes, which switch between warm rock sounds and crisp metal tones, that's basically it. Three knobs to tweak, a reasonable range of overdrives and the security of knowing that you've only blown 50 quid on the thing.

That's the Thunderball's USP, of course: the fact that it doesn't cost a bomb as well as being easy to use and ridiculously portable. I could name a dozen similar units that cost another 30 quid and offer twice as many tones, but that's not really the point. The Thunderball sounds ace and will be just the thing for anyone who is starting to investigate a fuzzed-up tone but doesn't want to blow a week's budget on it. Lose it backstage? Not the end of the world. Someone nicks it from the van? You and your credit card will live to fight another day. User-friendly, effective at what it does and unlikely to give you lower back pain unless you're less than 18 inches in height, the Thunderball does its job splendidly. ■

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

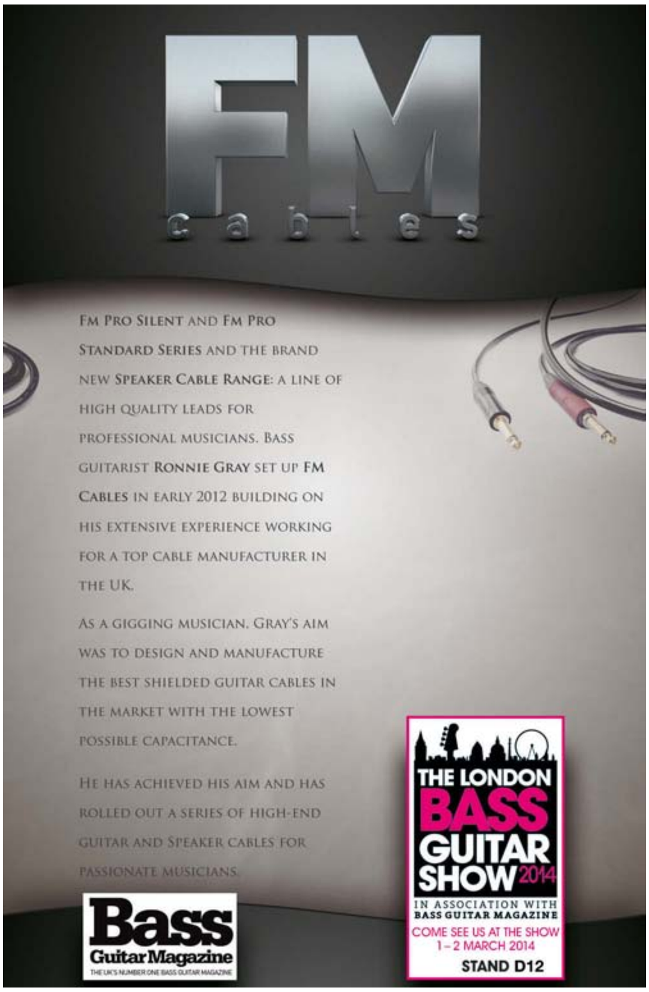
PRICE | £49.99
CONTROLS | Distortion and Fuzz selector, Volume, Tone, Gain
POWER | DC 9V Adapter
WEIGHT | 160g/0.44lbs
DIMENSIONS | 93.5mm (D) x 42mm (W) x 52mm (H)

WHAT WE THINK

PLUS | Solid, portable, efficient, cheap
MINUS | Wider tone ranges available for a few quid more
OVERALL | Does a great job at wallet-friendly price

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY ★★★★★★★★☆☆
SOUND QUALITY ★★★★★★★☆☆☆
VALUE ★★★★★★★★★★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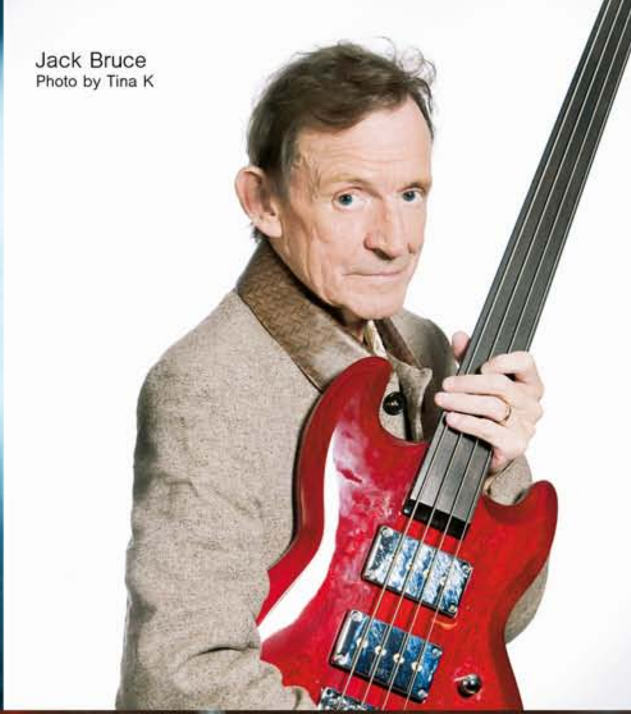
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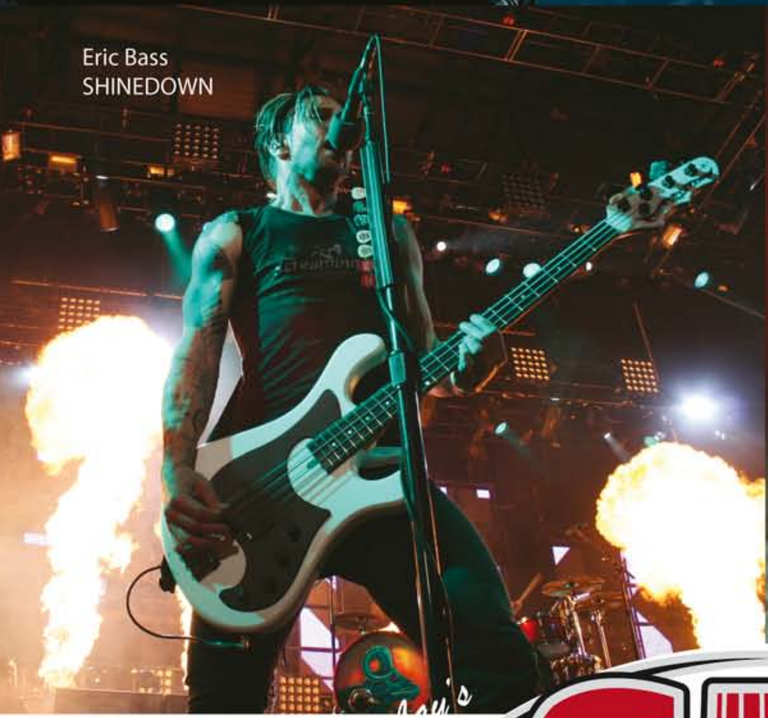
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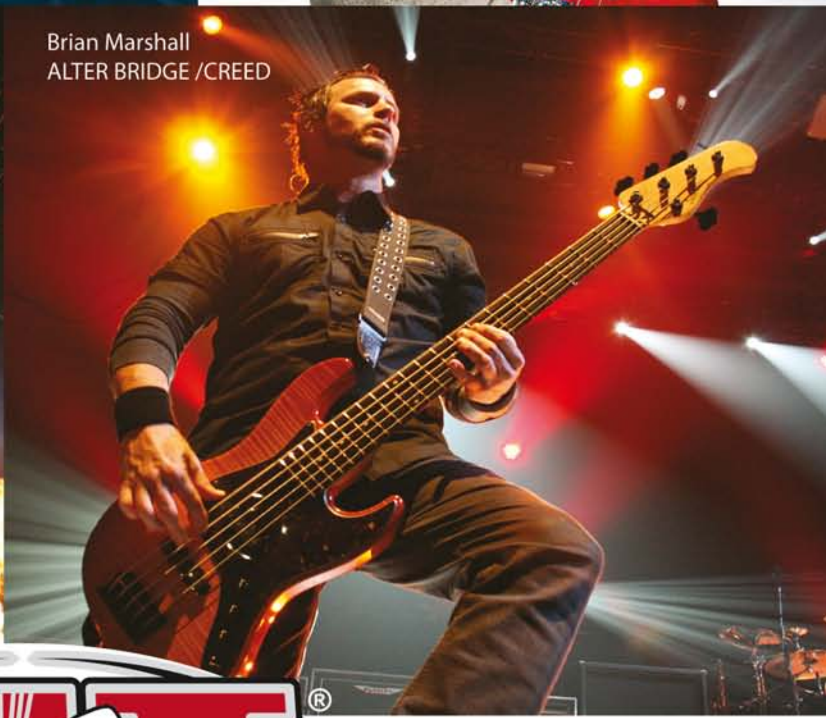
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Chris has amassed a staggering amount of insightful, interesting and sometimes irrelevant information on bass guitar equipment during his career as a professional bassist. So we continue to push electronics and bass amps under his nose and make him report to us on his favourites.

CHRIS HANBY @CHanbyEFX

JUGGERNAUT
BASS RAT

While watching Larry Graham explain his effects chain on his instructional video, I spotted that his drive of choice was something he called a Juggernaut. Many years later, I looked up Graham's mystery stomp and found that ProCo, of the Rat pedal fame, had manufactured it. They had released a reissue of the pedal in the mid-noughties and, as I was already a fan of the original Rat, my expectations for a bass-specific version were high.

IN USE

The blurb on the front of the box reads well. 'The bass player's Rat!', 'Professional Distortion Stomp Box', 'ability to blend', 'virtually indestructible'... all very inviting. The pedal itself is large: imagine two standard Rats side by side. It's also very heavy, like something manufactured in the Industrial Revolution. The left-hand side looks like the usual Rat configuration, with three knobs labelled Amount (of distortion), Tone and Volume. The right-hand side of the pedal has two controls: Mix, to blend the dry signal with the distortion, and Master Volume. So, excited to try my LG chops out, I plugged it in – and what I found was a surprise. There can be a slight delay in the pedal switching in and out, which is strange. Onto the controls themselves: many seem to affect the sound for only about 50% of their sweep, suggesting that the pots are the wrong values or that the board has been wrongly put together. Graham himself said that he went through 10 Juggernauts until he found one that was right. After much time spent, I was still searching for a sound I liked. Oh dear!

AVAILABILITY

The Juggernaut reissue has been discontinued since 2007, but is often available via eBay and online forums.

ALTERNATIVES

Firstly, I would suggest trying a standard Rat if that is the sound you are after. It usually works well with bass, keeping a sensible amount of low end. The Turbo Rat is also a favourite with bassists, as it offers a more intense distortion, which many find agreeable. If you enjoy a boutique effect then it's definitely worth looking at the Fuzzrocious Rat Tail, which offers a bass-tweaked Rat distortion with a blend control, available online for around £130.

CONCLUSION

I was very interested as soon as Larry Graham mentioned it. The concept is certainly sound. However, the product itself is underwhelming. The poor switching alone means it would be infuriating on a gig. Couple that with its seeming inability to produce a decent sound and it's plain to see why this isn't still in production. Still, if it worked for Mr Graham, who am I to argue? He now uses an entirely different distortion, and I can see why. ■

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THE FRONTLINE

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THE JAZZ BASSIST

RUTH GOLLER

Jazzer Ruth on training on the road

Touring and practising are two things that are quite difficult for me to combine. I toured for much of 2013 and found it very hard to be consistent with my practice routine. Of course, everybody is different in this respect, but for me travelling, having sometimes an hour, sometimes two in between arrival and soundcheck, or soundcheck and gig, made trying to practice in an efficient and focused way impossible. Tiredness plays a big part in this, as being in airports, and on buses and trains all day and then doing a soundcheck and a gig is not the most relaxing experience. As most of you double bassists know, keeping up stamina is a major challenge. If I don't play even for a few days, I can feel my hands and wrists getting weaker and it takes me some practice to build up their strength again. Sadly, there is never any time to really practise the double bass on the road. If I was lucky I had five minutes to warm up and to get to know the instrument, but that was it. All the double basses I played on tour were hired, so I was very aware of playing different basses in case I hurt my hands and wrists. As I've explained in my previous columns, I have a very personal set-up for my bass, which allows me to feel comfortable without risk of injury. A lot of people don't need to be careful with that and can play any bass, but not me. The only way I can work on my double bass playing is to keep up my strength. I have a power ball, which my physiotherapist suggested to me. This is a hand-sized ball, with a hard outer shell and a rotating ball inside. You start by pulling a string and then keep it rolling by moving your wrist. It is effectively a wrist trainer for musicians and climbers and a very portable item to take on tour with you. I must say it really helped me a lot and I didn't feel like a beginner again when I got home.

soundcloud.com/ruth-goller

THE METALHEAD

PAOLO GREGOLETTO

Trivium's bass guru debates pick versus fingers…

I've always suggested that it is great to learn how to play bass with your fingers, but recently I had to switch back to a pick for a show, and thankfully I was able to pull it off. What led to the sudden switch was a blister that started on my right middle finger: nothing I haven't experienced before, but it began to irritate the skin under my nail pretty bad. I was able to make it through a few shows until it finally was just too painful to play. Our music requires me to be able to play some fast parts, and playing with just one finger was not going to cut it. Midway through a song I walked up to Matt's mic, grabbed a pick off it and made my way through the rest of the song. Mind you, I've never attempted to play some of these songs with a pick, and it's been years since I have played songs like 'A Gunshot To The Head Of Trepidation' with one. It felt odd, but I had no choice if I was going to finish the set. We all do our best to take care of ourselves on the road, but sometimes you can't escape minor injuries caused from overuse and overplaying. This second leg of our 68-date tour has been the most brutal so far. We've had many five-show-in-a-row stretches that have definitely worn us down a bit more then we're used to: we even had to miss a show due to a vocal issue with Matt, the first time we've had to cancel because of an injury. Sometimes old injuries can flare up with a schedule such as this one. Colds and viruses also become much more prevalent towards the end of a tour, especially as the winter is kicking into high gear. Luckily for me, I had a plan B in case my picking hand wasn't working for some reason, and thank goodness I had some experience with it beforehand or I would have been way out of my comfort zone playing with a pick.

www.trivium.org

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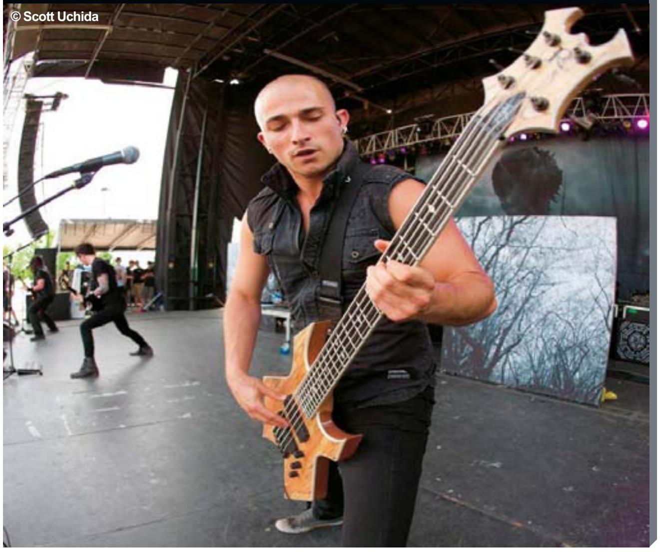

THE ALTERNATIVE ROCKER

MICHAEL MCKEEGAN

Therapy? bassist Mike gets his satnav out for the lads

With the recording of album number 14 imminent, I had resolved, playing-wise, to try and find a few different ways to achieve what most rock bass players strive to deliver. As we've been doing this for 24 years I didn't want to fall into my default mode: this year I hoped to deliver the same results – solid driving melodic bass – but by taking a different journey to get there. Imagine you take a walk to get your newspaper

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every day: do you take the same route? Or do you vary it? If not, maybe walk out the door and turn left for once, instead of turning right as you do every other day. I suppose applying that example to a bass-line is knowing where you eventually want to end up, but getting to it via a different route. Maybe going somewhere you've never been before, maybe going down a dead end or two, maybe getting so far lost you have to retrace your steps and start from the beginning all over again. So what have I been doing? I've tried to veer away from the obvious and introduce a few things I've either never done before, or touched upon but never developed or just explored to see what twists it brought to the songs. It's been a lot of fun and I've surprised myself by turning off that bit of my brain that screams 'This isn't the normal way!' In doing so I've freed up a load of interesting parts for the tunes. I've been playing chords as opposed to riffy single-note lines, breaking up the rhythm on verses, doing runs that move down into the chorus as opposed to up, and even sometimes stopping playing. Not all of it has been a success, I must admit, and I've got a few funny looks in the rehearsal room along the way, but the idea has definitely put a spin on my playing in a natural way.

www.therapyquestionmark.co.uk

THE EXTENDED-RANGE SPECIALIST

STEWART MCKINSEY

Ten-string maestro Stu says 'Catch phrase! Say what you see...'

Since I first began writing for *BGM*, I have addressed the practical and functional as well as the abstract, and referred you to players and equipment. We have touched on composition and finding your own voice, and even dealing with the attitudes of others. Now I'd like to focus on one of the most important aspects of being a soloist. As with many of the things we've touched on, this is something that will benefit your ability to function as a bassist and will enhance your composition. I'd like to write a bit about phrasing.

This is one of the harder things to teach, and most often manifests after years of hard work and playing in ensembles, a product of osmosis as much as anything else. But by focusing on it now, hearing it and identifying it in other's playing, it will open you to improving your own playing. Phrasing is how you play a group of notes. This is all about the nuances of rhythm and expressiveness in playing music. Because we as bassists tend to think about solid rhythm and playing with confidence, we often overlook aspects of what we do, such as playing with dynamics and syncopation. We're always thinking about what we have to play to make the music happen, but melody players think much more about space and what not to play in order to bring the music to life. This is a crucial distinction and one we need to consider to become better rounded artists.

While I have mentioned listening to singers, find passages in film or even speeches that have moved you. The cadence and intonation of the speaking voice is amazing. Even comedy can have an effect when delivered by one who knows how to use his or her voice. This will help you as a bassist. The more you understand what makes a great soloist, the better you understand how to compose music that touches your audience on multiple levels.

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BASS TECHNIQUES

Making you a better bass player

Welcome to our redesigned techniques section, in which *Bass Guitar Magazine* collates the wit and wisdom of the *crème de la crème* of the electric and upright bass world. We're fortunate enough to have some serious talent on the team, from world-class music educators to experienced touring musicians, who between them have laid down the low notes in every studio, club and arena in the civilised world. Note that we've divided the columns according to **Beginner**, **Intermediate** and **Advanced** level for easy reference. Whether you're looking to improve your playing technique, expand your awareness of theory, set up your rig to sound like your particular bass hero or simply get on a bus and tour, we provide the answers you need here. What are you waiting for? Dive in...

Joel McIver, editor

Jack Stevens graduated from the Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts in 2005 and has gone on to play bass with the likes of Craig David, Simon Webbe and Mick Hucknall. He is currently working with Chris McDonald and Shane Beales.
www.jackstevensbass.com

JACK STEVENS BEGINNER'S THEORY P80

Paul Geary attended the Berklee College of Music in Boston and the Musicians' Institute of Technology. He has played with artists including George Michael and Westlife. He also heads up the Academy Of Contemporary Music's bass school.
www.paulgeary.com

PAUL GEARY BEGINNER'S TECHNIQUES P82

Alex Webster has long been acknowledged as one of the heavy metal world's most advanced bass players, having founded the frankly terrifying Cannibal Corpse in 1988 and guesting since then on musically complex projects such as Blotted Science. He is the author of the Extreme Metal Bass instruction book.

ALEX WEBSTER INTERMEDIATE THEORY P84

Rob Statham has amassed over 25 years as a professional freelance bass player. He has played in a wide range of musical settings, including jazz, blues, prog and classical, and he has taught for the past three years at Tech Music School.

ROB STATHAM INTERMEDIATE TECHNIQUES P86

Head of the Bass Department at BIMM Brighton, Franc has worked with artists such as Steve Howe (Yes), Lisa Moorish, and Mike Lindup (Level 42). Franc uses Jeff Chapman basses and Elites strings.
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FRANC O'SHEA ADVANCED THEORY P90

Say hello to our new advanced techniques columnist Philip Mann, star of studio and stage. Ready to get those fingers flying? Mann up...

PHILIP MANN ADVANCED TECHNIQUES P92

David Etheridge studied double bass at the Royal College of Music. Since then he's worked with musicians as diverse as Nigel Kennedy and Martin Taylor. David teaches double and electric bass and is the MD of two big bands and a 55-piece jazz orchestra.

DAVID ETHERIDGE UPRIGHT BASS P94

Kev Sanders is a freelance electric and double bassist who has gigged and recorded with many artists. As well as numerous BBC radio and television sessions, he's played over 4,000 live gigs. He is the head of Bass Studies at AMS.
www.kevsanders.com

KEVIN SANDERS SOUND LIKE YOUR HEROES P96

JACK STEVENS

Jack Stevens sets off on a beginner's trip through generating killer bass parts

Part 10 of *BGM's* beginner theory column took a look at the all-important area of key signatures and the way they tell us which notes to play in a written passage of music. In part 11, we're going to explore some more interesting bass-lines as well as build on our rhythmical vocabulary. Reading music is fun and empowering, opening up many doors when it comes to access to music and employability as a musician. Music is, after all, a language in itself – and notation is the way we write that language down.

Figure one is a simple bass-line that is built on a C Major scale. *Figure two* is a minor variation of *figure one*, in which I have altered the notes E to become E♭ and the B to B♭. Remind yourself of both your one-octave C major and minor scales before playing these two lines.

Figure three is another repetition of our bass-line, but this time I have notated it in the key of C minor, so that the E♭ and B♭ don't need to be pointed out within the phrase by an accidental marking. A common mistake for beginners is to neglect the key signature and then wonder why a particular line they're reading sounds odd.

Figure four contains all of the rhythmical information of our bass-line, but to add a bit more spice to it, and to test your reading of the notes, I have added some accidentals. Probably the trickiest part about this exercise is finding a left-hand fingering pattern that suits you. This line jumps between a minor- and major-sounding pattern, so you'll be required to do some stretching and/or position shifting. I have used the tab to give you my suggested fingering, but this is by no means the only way to play this line. Go forth and experiment!

Figure five demonstrates what happens if we play our original minor-sounding bass-line from *figure two*, but in the key of A♭ major/F minor: remember that each major key has its relative minor key. Listen to how that D♭ adds a new colour to the sound of that line. ■

Figure 1

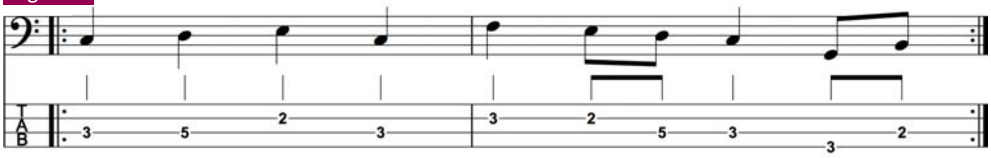


Figure 2

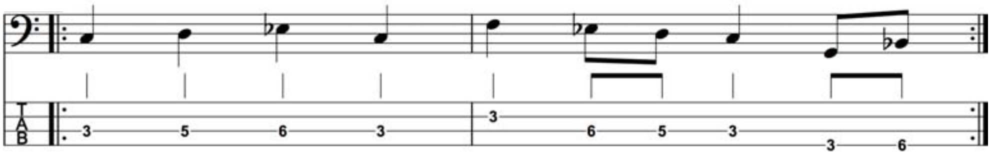


Figure 3

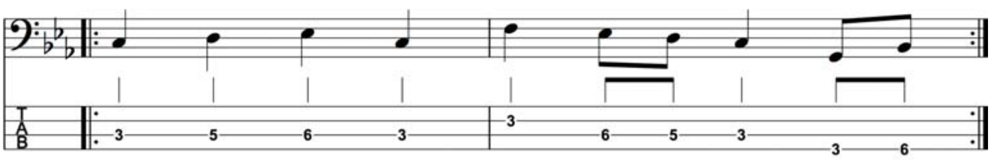


Figure 4

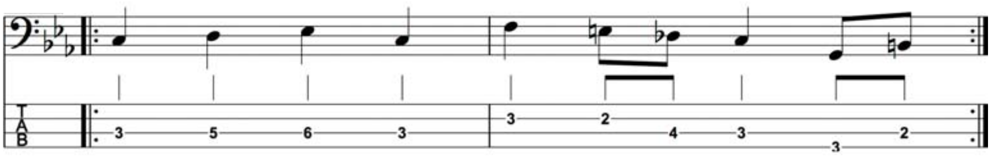
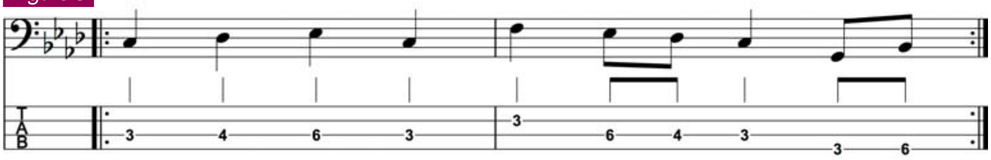


Figure 5



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PAUL GEARY

The Gearymeister introduces... the pat!

This month, let's take a look at a cool rhythmical device commonly known as the pat. This particular technique emulates a dead note thumb with the fretting hand over the neck of the bass. The beauty of this is that the thumb on the plucking hand doesn't have to work quite so hard or move as fast when attempting a rapid fill or an up-tempo slap bass-line.

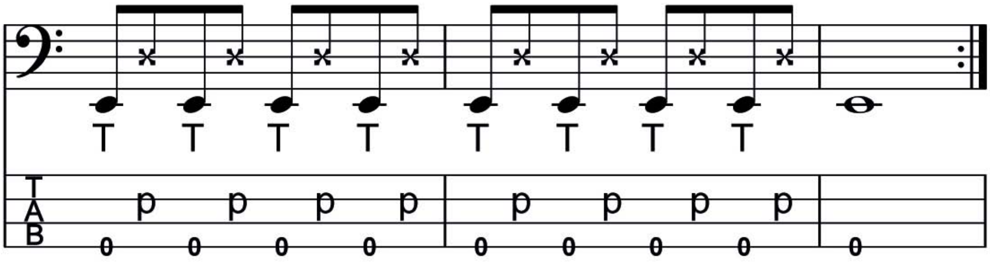
EXAMPLE 1

Let's start by getting used to the sound and feel of the pat on the fretboard. As you can see, the notation this month is a little different. I have indicated the pat on the tablature only, using the letter P. I have also used P just under the stave, which indicates a pluck as normal. Make sure that when you play these 8th notes the fretting-hand pat comes down strongly on to the fretboard, making a similar sound to a normal dead note thumb hit with the plucking hand. This is crucial in getting the right tone and feel.

EXAMPLES 2 AND 3

Continue this process across the neck using open strings A,

EXAMPLE 1



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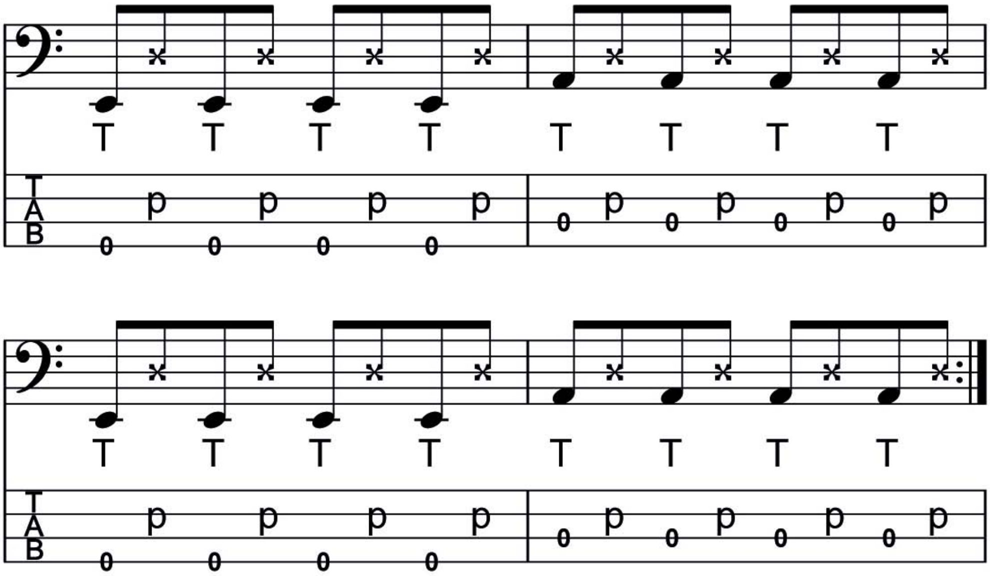
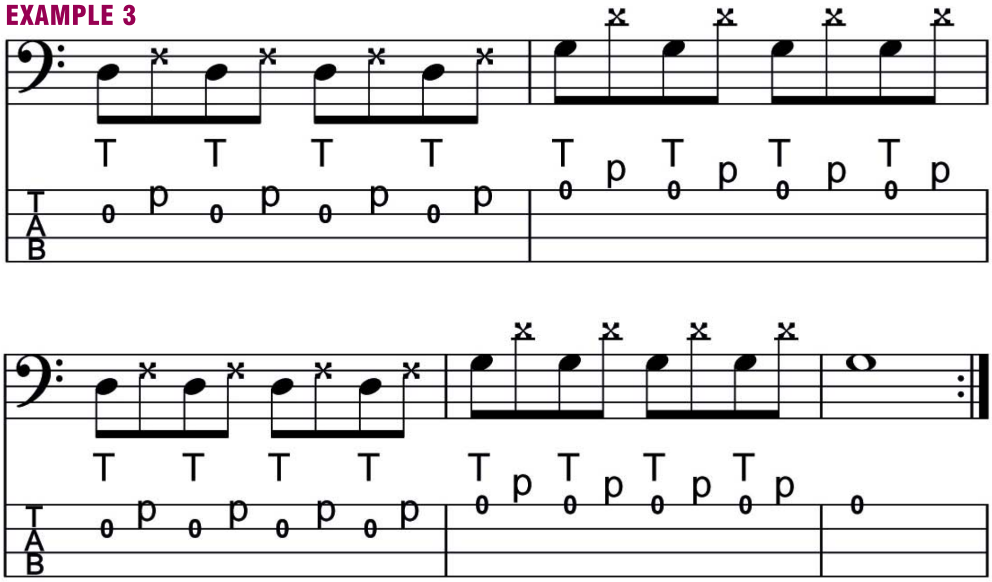


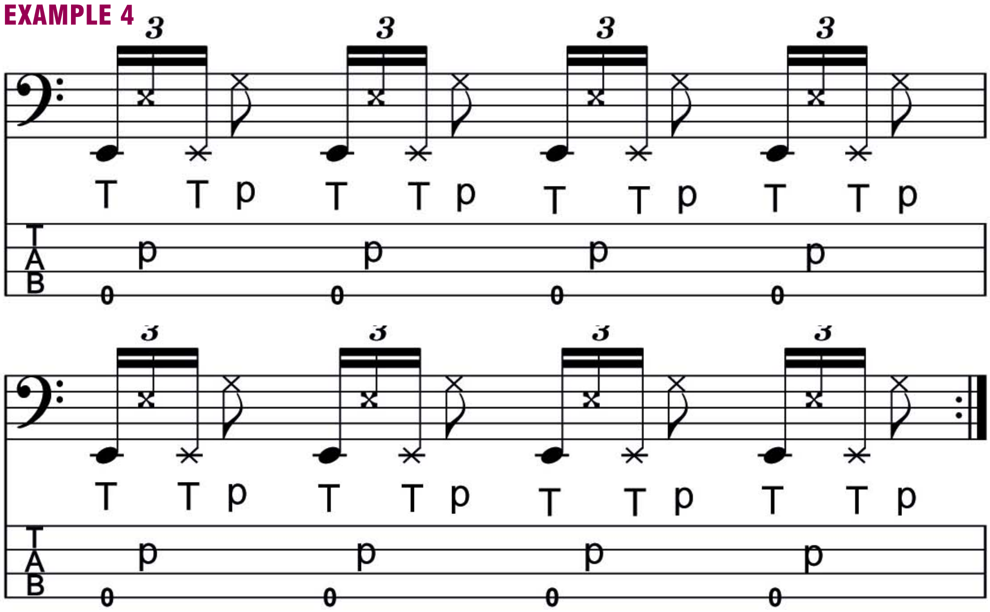
EXAMPLE 3



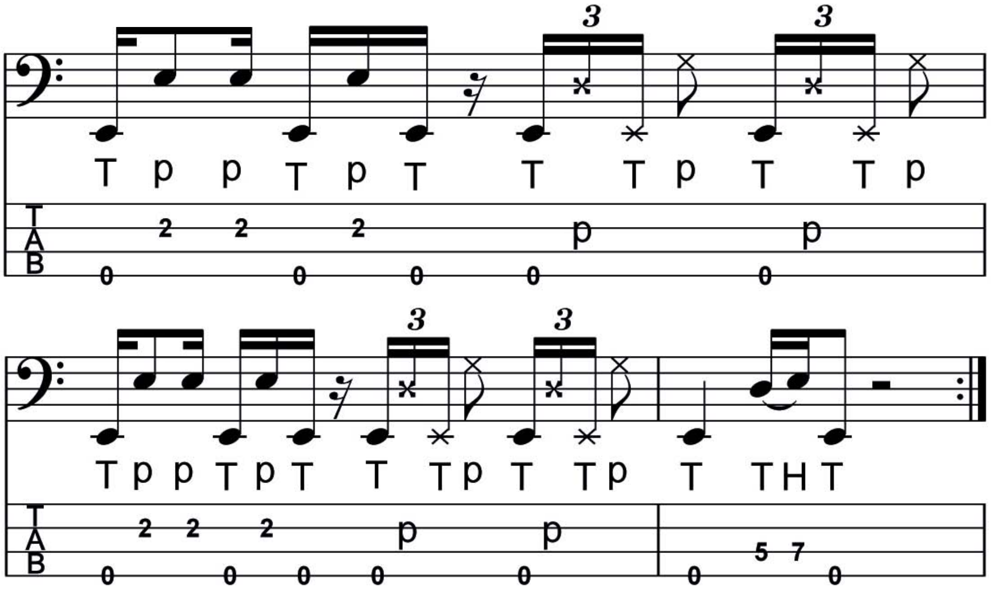
Extending your tone life

D and G, making sure you get a solid-sounding pat every time. At first you may experience an audible note when patting. Try to avoid this. It will be mainly due to the fact that you are being too accurate with your fingers on your fretting hand and not strong enough with your pat. This may also result in some unwanted harmonic overtones from the strings. It really is all down to practice. Make sure you get a strong sounding thumb on each open string, followed by a strong percussive pat with your fretting hand. It is OK to let the fingers on your fretting hand come over the top of the fretboard on this occasion. This should help you to resist the temptation of playing an actual note with your fingers rather than a dead note that is needed.

EXAMPLE 4



EXAMPLE 5



EXAMPLE 4

This next example uses a triplet rhythm. The purpose of a triplet is to fit three notes into the space of two. Watch out for the regular thumbed note and pluck straight after the pat. This rhythm is great for fills and the construction of fluid slap bass-lines. Start out at around 80BPM and increase to 120 when you have the pat sounding just right. Remember, don't be frightened to hit the bass this way: you're more of a drummer at this point than a bassist.

EXAMPLE 5

This last example uses our old friends – 16th, 8th, 16th notes – on the opening rhythmical figure. Watch out for the double pluck in bar one and the hammer-on in the last bar from D to E (5th and 7th fret of the A string). Treat this one as a three-bar repetitive groove. Keep the tempo steady and the tone consistent. Try recording yourself. You really don't have to go to the expense of booking Abbey Road: just use your phone. It's not about the quality of the recording: it is about the actual sound you're making and the consistency of groove, tone and feel.

Next time we will be putting the pat, along with some of the other rhythmical devices we have looked at in this series, into some slap bass lines. Until then, happy patting! ■

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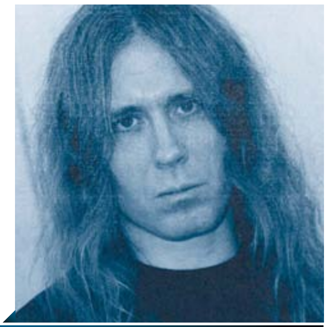


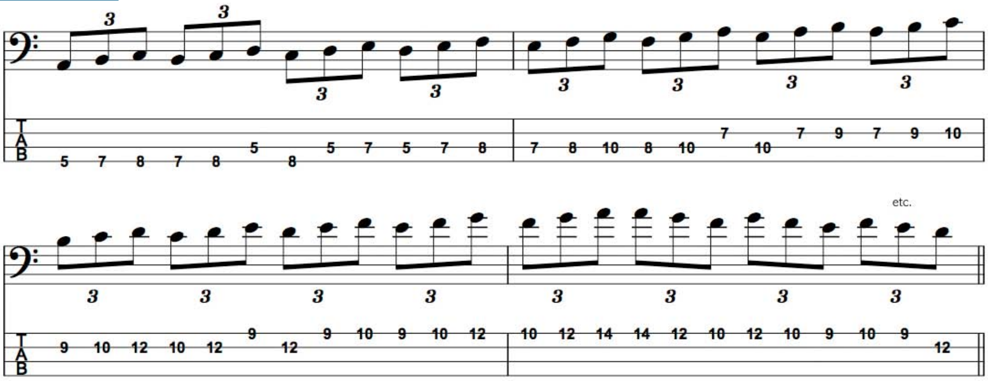
ALEX WEBSTER

Professor Webster introduces part one of a series on variations of common scale patterns...

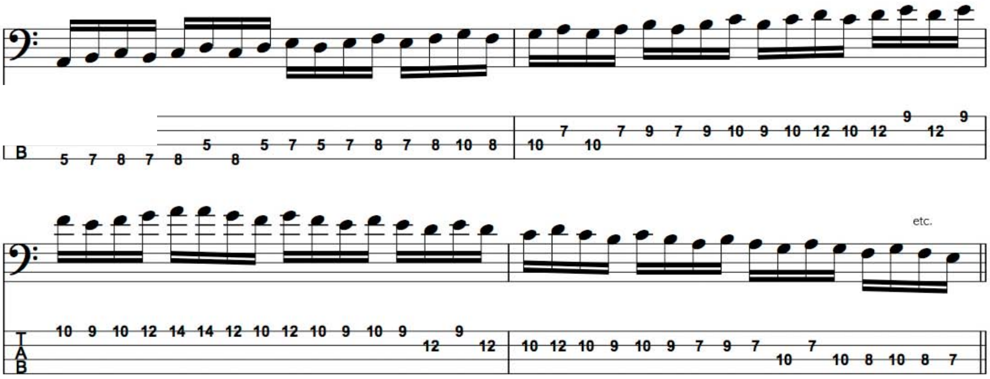
As bassists, a lot of our time is spent working on scales, but it's often not the most exciting part of our practice routines. My goal for the initial instalments of this column has been to make the scale practice in our bass regimens a bit more interesting and musical. So far, we've looked at arpeggio patterns as an alternative to typical linear scale patterns. Now we'll take a different approach and work our way through a scale three and four notes at a time, using variations in the beat's subdivision to create interest. Remember that although I've chosen the A minor scale as the example scale for these exercises, the ideas shown can be applied to virtually any scale.

For these examples you'll want to set your metronome at a tempo where you can comfortably play the A minor scale in 16th notes, as this will be the smallest subdivision we'll be using in the next few instalments of the column. Note: I recommend that you learn the fingering for these examples before trying to play them with the metronome. As you might expect, it's easier to play cleanly and in time if you know what you're supposed to be playing!

Example 1



Example 2



> "IN EXAMPLE TWO WE'LL ADD SOME RHYTHMIC INTEREST TO THE PATTERN BY CHANGING THE SUBDIVISION FROM TRIPLET 8TH NOTES TO 16TH NOTES. YOU'LL BE PLAYING THE SAME PATTERN, BUT THIS TIME FOUR NOTES WILL BE PLAYED OVER EACH BEAT RATHER THAN THREE"

In *example one* we'll begin by going up and down the scale three notes at a time using triplet 8th notes, which neatly fits three notes per beat. This is an extremely common way to practise a scale so it's likely that this example will be familiar territory for you.

In *example two* we'll add some rhythmic interest to the pattern by changing the subdivision from triplet 8th notes to 16th notes. You'll be playing the same pattern, but this time four notes will be played over each beat rather than three. This can be tricky at first as the three-note groups only begin on the beat after every third beat (after 12 notes, so four three-note groups). It's simple maths (3 x 4 = 12) but it makes the pattern a bit more challenging to play, and in my opinion, a lot more interesting to listen to.

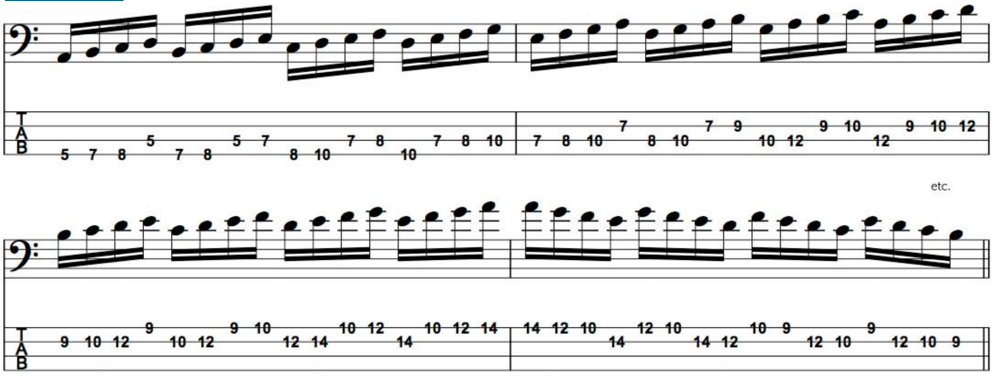
In *example three* we'll go up the scale four notes at a time using 16th notes. You've probably already done this one too – groups of four notes up and down the scale, four notes per beat.

Extending your tone life

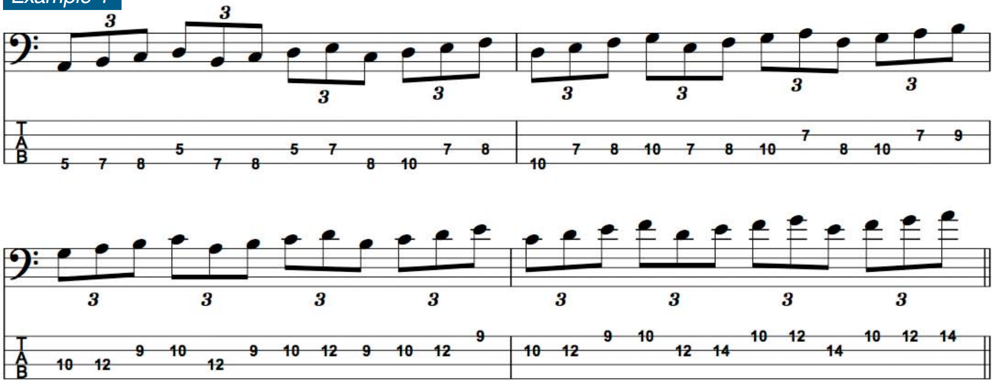
Moving on to *example four*, let's try the same pattern but change the subdivision from 16th notes to 8th note triplets, which means you'll be playing three notes of the pattern for each beat. Again the simple 3 x 4 maths comes into play: there are three four-note groups for every four beats, so you'll start a four-note group on the first beat of each measure. Again, it's more challenging but also more interesting.

I hope these examples will help make your mandatory scale practice more entertaining. More variations of subdivisions and groupings are coming next month. ■

Example 3



Example 4



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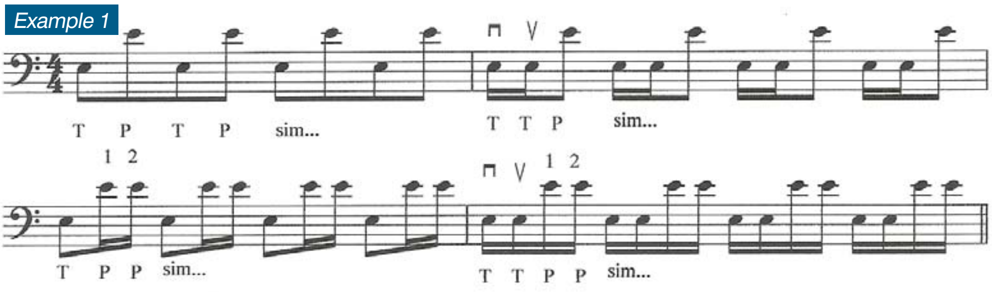
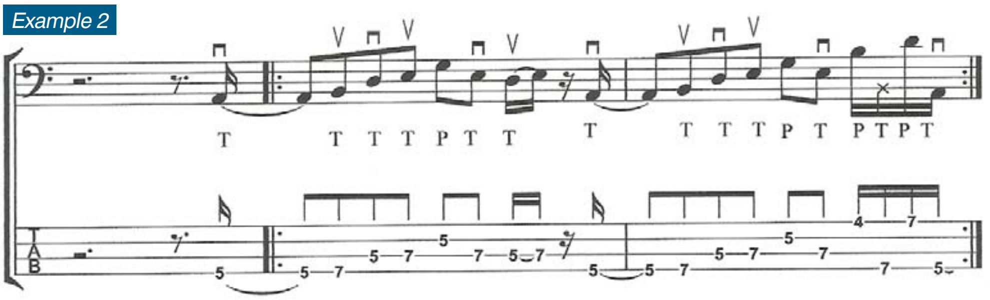
ROB STATHAM

Rob enters the murky world of intermediate slap theory. Strap yourself in...

Example 1



Example 2



Slap bass is a technique that has, in the 40 or so years since its appearance, grown and expanded from the basic concept of thumb slap and finger pop to include other nuances of the style, such as left-hand slap, double thumbing, middle finger pop and thumb pops, as well as incorporating techniques we are already familiar with from playing fingerstyle, such as dead notes, hammer-ons, and pull-offs. Let's review these techniques, providing a synopsis of the different elements that can be incorporated into playing in this style.

In a previous column we've looked at left-hand slap, hammer-ons and pull-offs, so I'll include these techniques in our synopsis with examples. A good place to start might be to talk a little about thumbing technique, which has evolved somewhat over the years. Let us consider playing a typical slap-style octave pattern, thumbing the root and popping the octave, 70s disco style. This is the most basic concept for slap bass and it has an inherent weakness in that we often find ourselves always alternating between thumb and finger pop, which produces a certain type of bass-line, usually based on octaves or perhaps 10ths. This tends to preclude more linear lines such as ones, which we might play fingerstyle.

Now, most of us at first will probably play our thumb stroke striking the string perpendicular to the plane of the fingerboard, hitting down on top of the string. The problem with this can be that to play two successive thumb strokes requires a two-way movement of the thumb, lifting it back up before striking down again. This can also cause muted tones that we didn't intend. However, if we hit the string at an angle as a downstroke, then we can, in one movement, move our thumb back upward and play an upstroke, as if we are using our thumb like a plectrum. This will also ensure that our thumb is less likely to mute a note inadvertently as it will not be right over the string. This is the basic concept for double thumbing. It is particularly useful for faster, thumbed passages, enabling more linear ideas to be played, but the general idea of thumbing across the string can also be used for downstrokes only. As with plectrum technique, we can use both up and down strokes, or, if we wish, just down strokes.

The first exercise is intended to develop this technique as well as middle finger pop, that is, using our second finger as well as our first to play popped tones. I have written four bars of an octave pattern in E, bar one played as 8th notes in the usual way; bar two with the root played as two 16ths employing double thumb technique; bar three turns this idea around to play the two 16ths on the octave, using both our first and second finger to produce the popped notes; and bar four combines these two variations so that we are playing all 16ths and using both double thumbing and middle finger pop.

Note that I have used bowed instrument convention to denote up and down strokes of the thumb, the V being an upstroke. Feel free to play each bar a number of times before moving to the next at first, the ultimate aim being to move smoothly between the different articulations. If you wish to concentrate on the double thumbing aspect, then another useful exercise is simply to play a succession of alternating up and down strokes across all four strings in turn. So, for instance, play a bar of 8th notes on the E string, alternating up and down strokes, then the same on the A string, and so on – the fretted tone isn't too important as we're concentrating on our other hand, so it could be open string, muted tone, or any note you like.

The second example is a two-bar bass-line that uses double thumb technique as well as hammer-ons, popped tones and muted slap. Interestingly, if you check the notation, it looks like a linear, fingerstyle line, right up until the last beat of bar two when it has the appearance of a

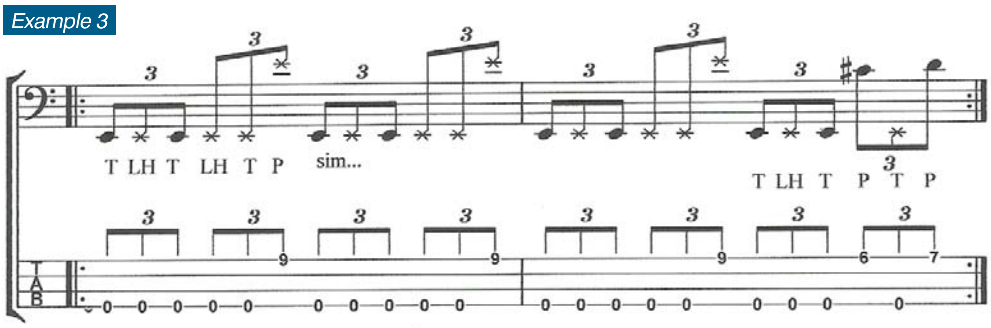
Extending your tone life

typical slap and pop pattern. I have notated down and up strokes for the thumb in order to practise this technique, but, depending on the tempo, this could be played as all downstrokes. The idea starts with this thumbing technique before hitting a popped tone on the 3rd beat, and a hammer-on on the 4th beat. Bar two starts in the same way, but, as mentioned, the last beat is a more typical slap and pop combination incorporating a muted slap on the 2nd 16th. This is played a bit like a fingerstyle dead note, deadening the note in the fretting hand, but in slap style we can play muted slaps and muted pops, which have a somewhat different sound from each other, so, in effect, this gives us two flavours of dead note.

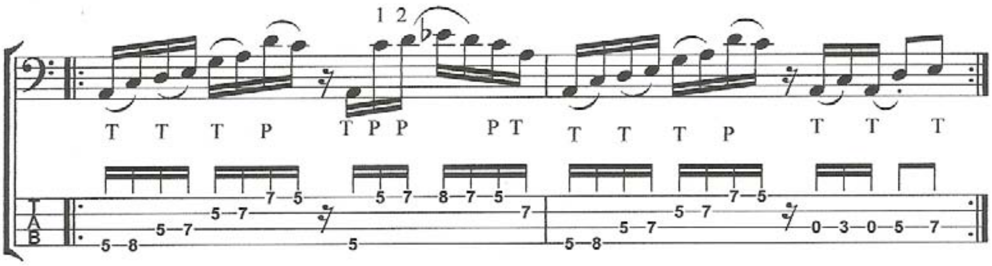
The next idea is a shuffle feel, incorporating left-hand slap, muted slap and pop tones, creating a very percussive effect. You will see that it is effectively a two-beat pattern repeated three times with a variation on the fourth time. The two-beat figure begins by alternating slap and left-hand slap tones, briefly creating a two against three rhythmic pattern, before finishing with a muted slap and pop tones. On the fourth time, the second half of bar two, the figure begins the same way, but the second beat is a variation, using pop and slap tones.

Combinations employing left-hand slap, slap, and muted slap and pop can create a very percussive effect, and, as I mentioned in a previous column, we can make use of drum rudiments to explore different rhythmic patterns, alternating between the left and right hand.

Example 3



Example 4



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The final example is a two-bar line on an A minor pentatonic, making use of hammer-ons and pull-offs, and also incorporating a middle finger pop. The slightly tricky bit is the second half of bar one, popping with first and then second finger, then hammering on for the Eb and pulling off to return to the D. The thumb strokes in this instance can all be played as downstrokes, the subsequent hammer-on giving us enough time to achieve this comfortably.

As you can see, there are many possibilities for combining these different nuances of slap bass, so experiment with your own ideas as you develop these techniques, and be sure to check out plenty of Marcus Miller and Victor Wooten, two musicians who have done as much as anyone to take slap bass way beyond the clichés of 70s disco, creating a whole new vocabulary. ■

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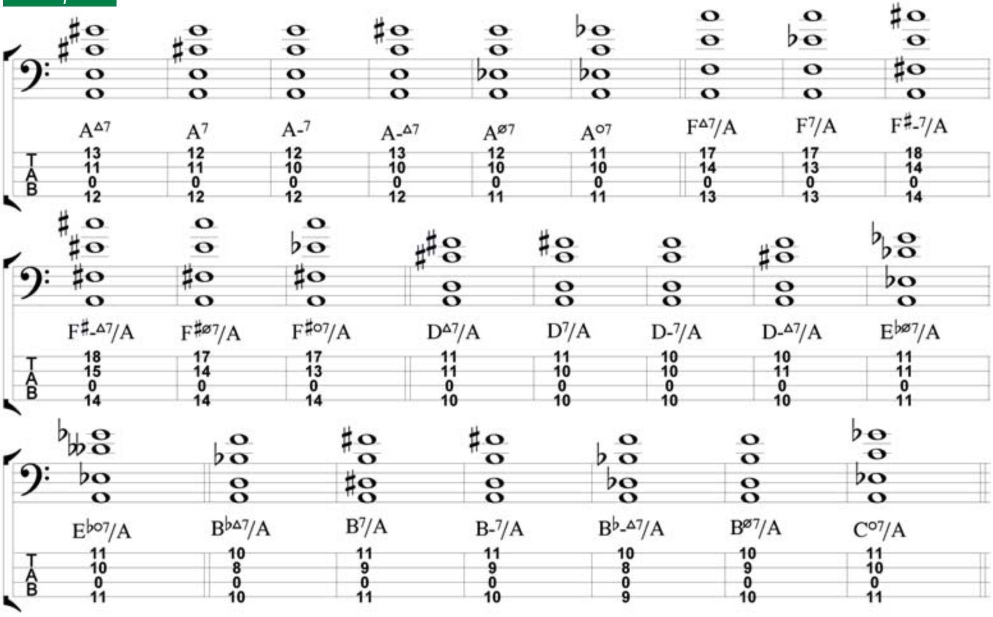
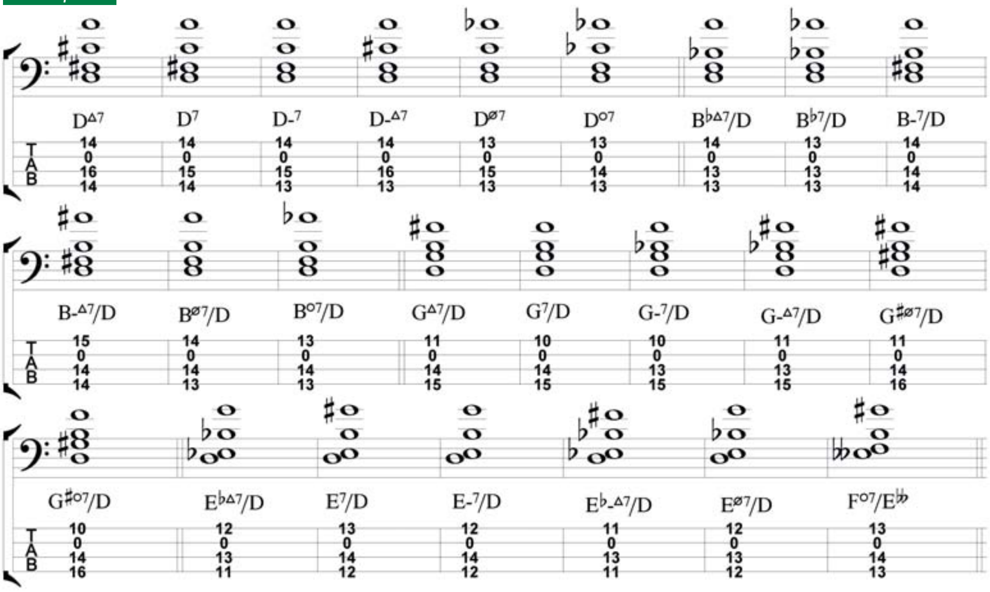
FRANC O'SHEA

Advanced bass techniques are Franc's middle name. Here the great man draws his chordal series to a close. Almost...

Example 1



Example 2



In this month's column I will be continuing to look at creating chord voicings that employ open strings in conjunction with fretted notes. Last month I looked at using the open E string combined with fretted notes on the A, D and G string. This month I'll be demonstrating how you can use either the open A (*example one*), D (*example two*) or G (*example three*) string while using fretted notes on the other strings to create some interesting voicings.

As I explained last month, due to the low range of the bass guitar, chord voicings that use open strings tend to sound clearer when just one open string is employed and the rest of the notes are fretted, especially in the higher range. If you have an extended instrument such as a six-string bass, or even a five-string tuned with a high C, you may find that using more than one string will work well, although probably your best bet will be to experiment with using the high C and either the low E or B string combined with fretted notes that appear in a higher octave.

Although in this month's column my focus is on building 7th chords, you will find that once you understand the principles at work here, you should be able to adapt these ideas to help you create other chord types that use open strings, such as Sus and Add chords. You will also note that even though there are 13 different types of 7th chord, I use only the six main types in the examples shown here: you can further extend these ideas to include chords with altered 5ths by simply sharpening or lowering the 5th a semitone as is appropriate. However, be aware that if the voicing employs the open string as the 5th, you will need to move all the fretted notes up or down a semitone to lower or raise the 5th in relation to the rest of the chord's new position.

For example, bar 13 of *example one* is a Dmaj7 chord appearing in second inversion, as the 5th,

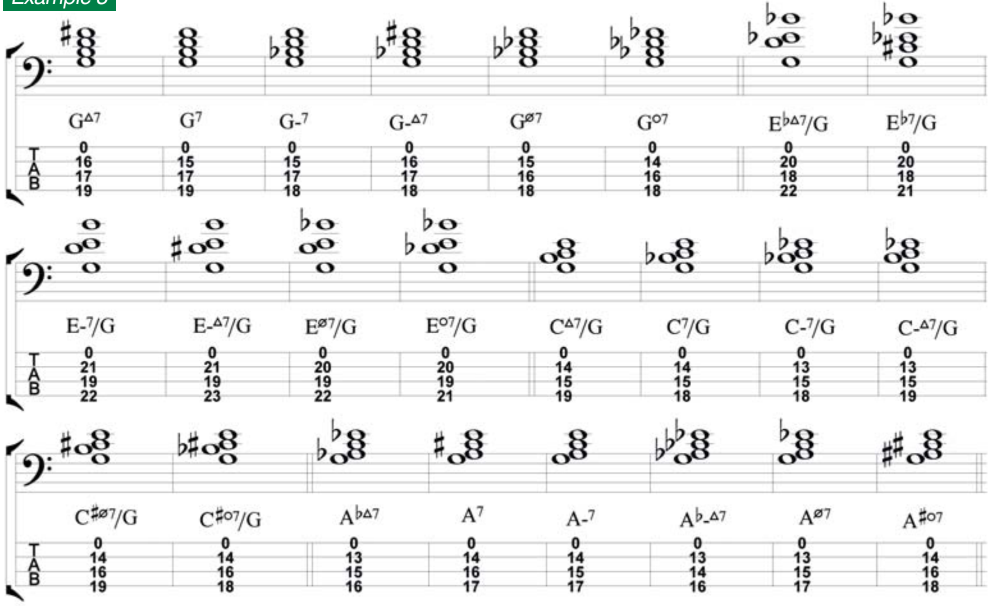
Extending your tone life

the open A string, is the lowest (deepest sounding) note. If we wanted to create a maj7 chord that uses the open A string as an augmented 5th, therefore #5, since the A is a fixed pitch, we would have to alter all the fretted notes by shifting them down a semitone, thus making the open A a semitone higher in relation to the lowered position of the rest of the notes in the new voicing. The chord would then appear as a Dbmaj7#5/A.

Another example would be if we wanted to use the open A as a diminished 5th, so b5, to create a maj7b5 chord, we would have to move all the fretted notes of the chord shown in bar 13 up a semitone, so that in relation to the higher position of the fretted notes the open A will appear a semitone lower, thus creating a D#maj7b5/A. This same phenomenon already naturally occurs with some of the six main types of 7th chords shown in all the examples here. For example, if a chord in second inversion has a diminished 5th, then its root note, that is to say the note that creates the prefix alphabetical root name of the chord, will appear a semitone higher than chords using the same open string that have natural 5ths. For example, a half diminished 7th chord is the same as a minor 7th chord, the only difference being that a half diminished 7th chord has a flattened, diminished 5th, whereas a minor 7th chord contains a natural, perfect 5th.

With this in mind, you will notice that the chord in bar 15 of *example one* is a Dmin7, and its fretted notes all appear at the 10th fret, whereas the chord appearing in bar 17 is a half diminished

Example 3



7th, or min7b5 chord, and therefore all the fretted notes appear a semitone higher at the 11th fret, creating an Eb half diminished 7th chord. This same principle occurs not just with 5ths but also with other chord notes when the open string appears as either a major or minor 3rd, or as a major, minor or even diminished, 7th in the chord. If the open string appears as a major 3rd when a chord is in first inversion for example, its minor counterpart's root note will appear a semitone higher so as to lower 3rd by a semitone in relation to the root note's new, higher, position.

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For instance, the only difference between a major 7th and a minor major 7th chord is the 3rd. A major 7th chord contains a major 3rd, whereas a minor major 7th chord contains a minor 3rd. The chords appearing in first inversion in bars seven and 10 of *example two* clearly demonstrate this relationship. The open D string is the major 3rd of the Bbmaj7th chord and while the root, 5th and 7th are all also natural in the minor major 7th chord shown in bar 10, it has a minor 3rd and therefore all the fretted notes (the root, 5th and 7th) now appear a semitone (fret) higher than those shown in bar seven.

A good example of how this phenomenon occurs when the open string is employed as the 7th of the chord so that the chord appears in third inversion is at bars 23 and 24 of *example three*. Bar 23 shows an A half diminished 7th chord in third inversion, and the open D string is the b7th of the chord. Since the only difference between the voicing of a half diminished 7th chord and a diminished 7th chord is the 7th (the half diminished 7th contains a minor 7th interval whereas the diminished 7th has a diminished 7th interval), the fretted notes of the diminished chord shown in bar 24 appear a semitone higher than those shown in the previous bar so as to lower its 7th by a semitone in relation to their new position, creating a bb7 interval and therefore a fully diminished 7th chord.

Next month I will be drawing my in-depth exposition of all things chordal to a close by looking at creating chord voicings on a five-string bass. Until then… ■

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PHILIP MANN

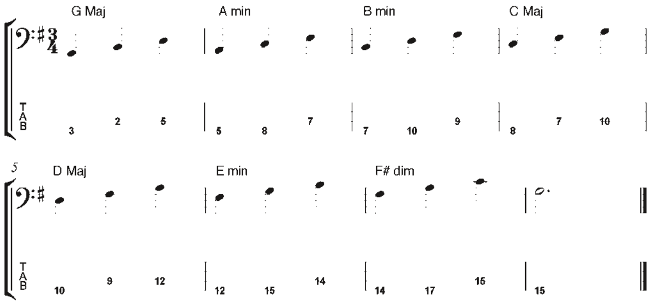
Say hello to our new advanced techniques columnist Philip Mann, star of studio and stage. Ready to get those fingers flying? Mann up...

Greetings and welcome, fellow low-end lovers, to my first column for *BGM*! Over the coming issues I'd like us to develop some ideas to try and help progress our tapping technique further. Rather than specifically targeting specialist melodic phrases, I'd like to approach the technique in a manner that will let us use it in our day-to-day contemporary playing. Hopefully this approach will help us imply supportive harmonic information for other instrumentalists or some sort of atmospheric textures.

We'll begin by covering some initial foundation theory using the harmonised major scale, as I don't want to assume anything at this early stage. Then, as the series develops, we'll include some other additional elements, such as chord extensions.

Let's quickly recap the major scale, harmonised in the key of G, using only triads:

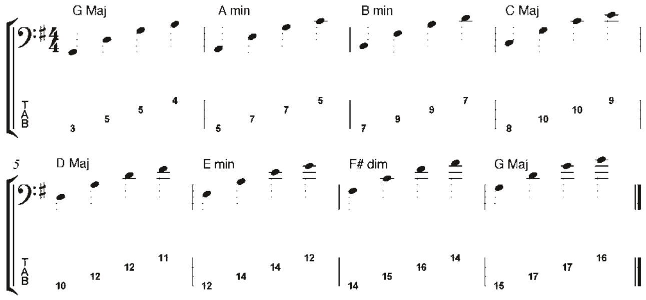
Example 1



Playing the triads all along one string in the above manner acts as a platform to build upon. In each of the above scenarios, let's now double the tonic and move the 3rd up an octave from its original position. This will create a new voicing which will generate the tools to 'sweep' the triad across the fretboard. This revised voicing lets us approach the fretboard vertically instead of horizontally, which is reminiscent, if you will, of our six-string cousins' sweeping picking technique.

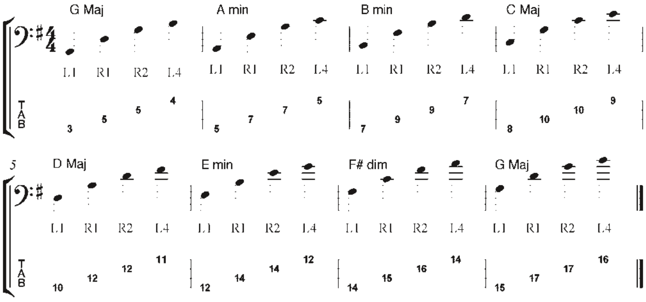
Let's re-address the harmonised G major scale, using this revised voicing fingerstyle.

Example 2



With this under hand, let's remove the traditional plucking technique and execute each triad by splitting the pitches between both the left and right hands and playing them simultaneously on the same fretboard. In the following example, I've indicated which finger plays which note by using the system L (Left Hand), R (Right Hand), 1 (Index Finger), 2 (Middle Finger), 3 (Ring Finger), and 4 (Little Finger).

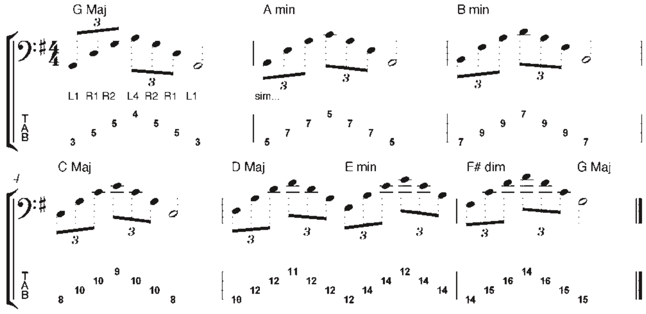
Example 3



Striking the notes directly onto the fretboard with both hands instead of executing them in a traditional manner does create a unique dampening issue with the string vibrating in two places. To diminish this dampening issue, you can use either the cheap option of placing a hairband over the nut end of your fretboard, or endorse one of the more expensive options such as a Fretwrap-type product. Once you've become familiar with the previous exercises, take a look at this final one, which introduces some varying rhythmical elements.

The ascending and descending triad shapes are now being executed as triplets. For the first bars of the exercise, there's a semibreve in place to help give you time to think, whereas later in the same example, it has been removed. Until next time, practise hard! ■

Example 4



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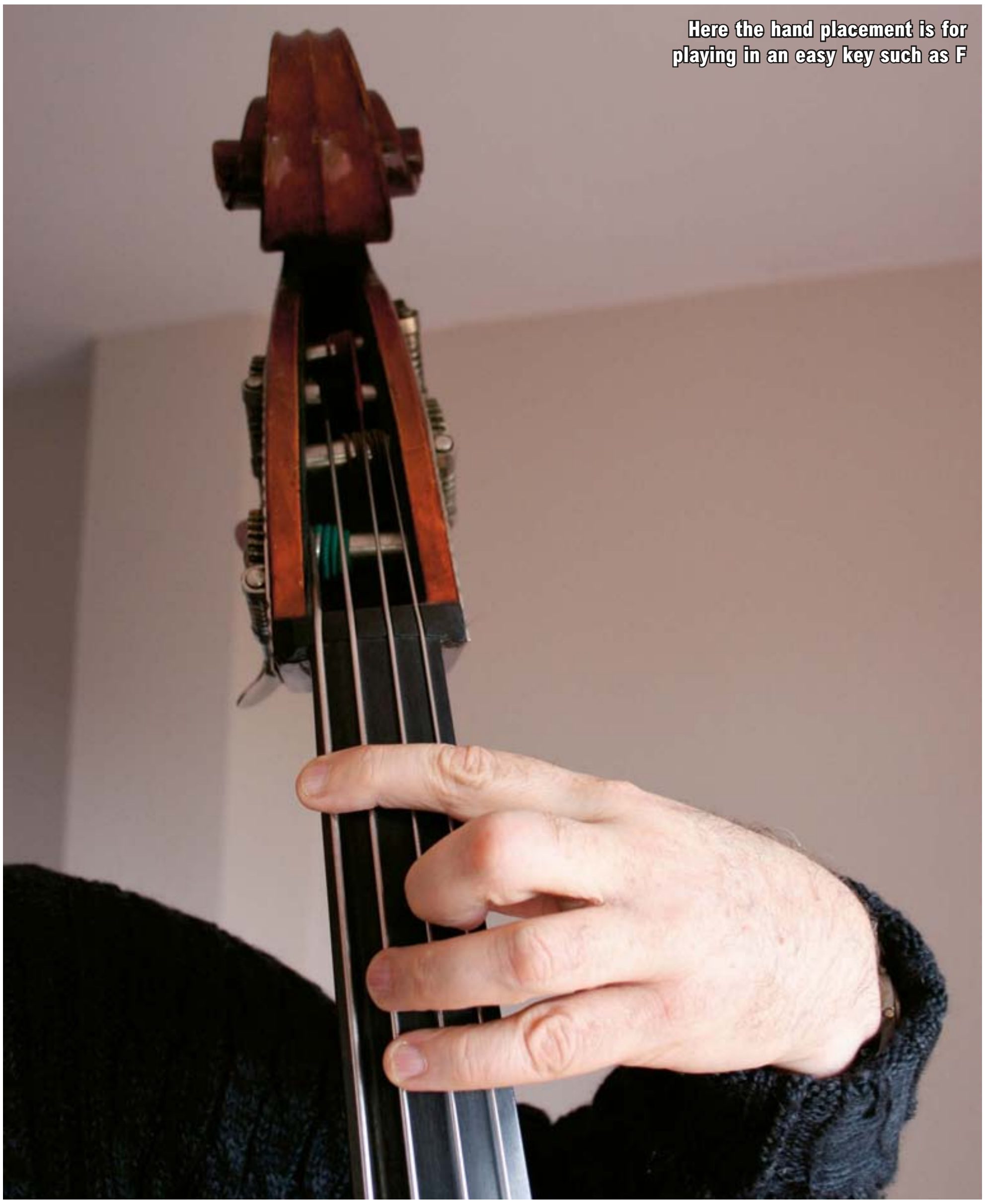
DAVID ETHERIDGE

Double bass supremo David Etheridge explores the multiple joys of transposition



Here the hand placement is for playing in an easy key such as F

You never know when you're going to have to transpose on the fly. This can happen in shows and pit work, where it becomes obvious that a singer either can't reach those top notes, or even the lower ones, and the MD smartly raps out "Up a third/down a fourth!" or similar. You then have to suddenly transpose up or down said interval – and suddenly find that instead of cruising gently through a tune in C, you're now in the no-man's-land of F#. In addition, you might be working from a piano part where all the notes will be written down an octave (all those leger lines) and you have to do some fast mental work to stay on top of things.

This can also happen in classical music; many years ago I was playing a baroque piece in Hereford Cathedral for the Music School there, and the part I was given was in a most obscure clef: not treble, not bass, not alto or tenor. From memory it was some weird placing of the treble clef a line up or down from usual, possibly mezzosoprano clef. I worked out where G was supposed to be (the curly bit in the middle) and I knew I was stuffed. What to do?

I suddenly had a brainwave: if I read it as though it was in bass clef, but moved my hand up to the right position for the new key, as long as I stayed away from open strings and limited my shifts to a semitone and adjacent positions, then I'd be fine. It took a bit of mental concentration and deliberately ignoring the messages that my muscles were sending me that I was in the wrong position, but it worked! Said concert performance went very well, and I only hit an inadvertent open string once, so nobody noticed. Try reading a part as though it's in F, but play it in A or B without touching open strings, and you'll get the idea.

Now the principle here is one that I now teach my students whenever the subject of transposing from a chord chart or a printed part comes up. Remember that the relative distances of notes are the same in any key: a major 7th is a major 7th in C, Ab, F# or B, and also the same in any of the clefs. To a certain degree, it doesn't matter which note you are playing, as long as it's the required interval

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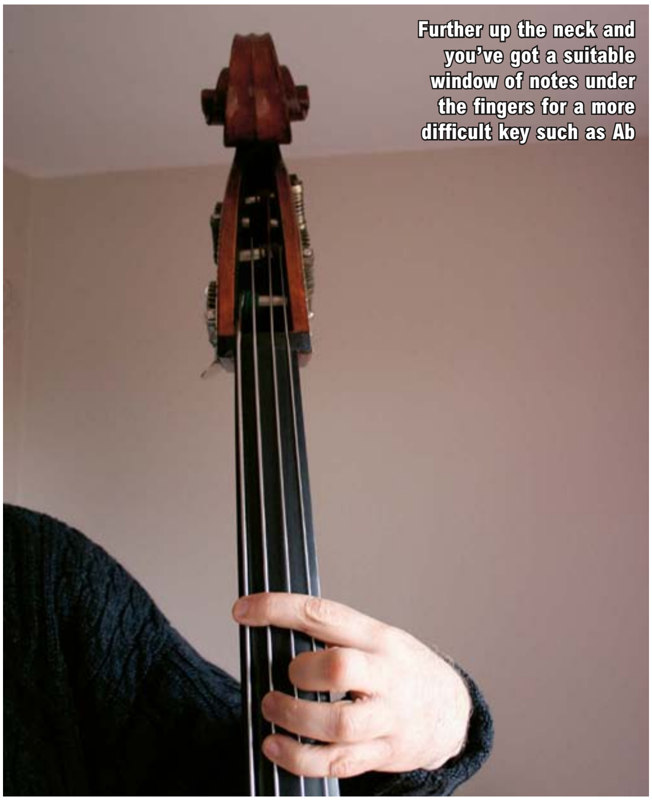
Further up the neck and you've got a suitable window of notes under the fingers for a more difficult key such as Ab

Side view of the playing position for the key of F

Side view of Ab hand placement

away from the previous note. As long as you start on the right note, observing the intervals as you go along means that you should be always in the right place. It's the same with chord charts: as long as you follow the distances between chords, it's possible to play a chart in any key by simply following the relative intervals. C/Am/Dm/G7 is just as straightforward as Ab/Fm/Bbm/Eb7, or indeed F#/D#m/G#m/C#7. The principle is the same. Of course, listening very intently as you go along obviously helps, too! ■

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KEVIN SANDERS

Kev flexes his wrist in this salute to the great Stanley Clarke

I can't believe that we've been running this column for over two years now and not yet looked at the playing of one of the biggest – if not the biggest – names in funk and fusion bass: Stanley Clarke.

Born and raised in Philadelphia, Clarke left the Philly Music Academy and moved straight to New York in the early 70s, where he immediately started working and collaborating with some of the biggest names in jazz and fusion of the day, Stan Getz, Chick Corea and Horace Silver. His work and friendship with Corea resulted in their forming one of the most influential bands of the 70s, the Latin-inspired fusion act Return To Forever, in which Clarke played both double and electric bass. Clarke quickly established himself as a great soloist and in 1976, the same year when Jaco Pastorius released his own eponymous album, he released his amazing LP *School Days*. Both records became milestones in bass history.

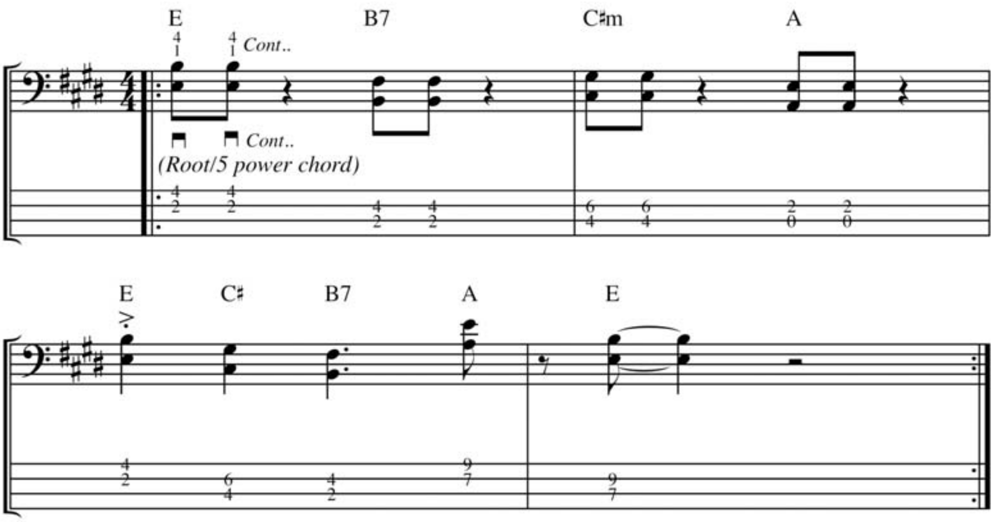
Since then, Clarke has continued to write and perform, and has had more honours bestowed upon him than virtually any other bass player in history. He's written and recorded dozens of movie soundtracks, has released 20 solo albums and has played on many, many more. He's the consummate musician, producer and composer, but most of all, he is a great bass player who has influenced a whole generation of funksters.

STYLE

Clarke says that he saw Larry Graham slap and took the idea to a new level. He certainly was one of the first bass players to use slap over complex chord and rhythm changes rather than just a rhythmic groove in the key of E. Although his slap playing is fairly lick-based, he does have some killer grooves – both plucked and slapped. Unusually for a funk player, Clarke plucks the strings around the end of the neck, more like a double bass player. Another distinctive Clarke technique is that of strumming root/five double stops. You can hear this on the start of the track 'School Days', but it's something he's used a great deal throughout his career.

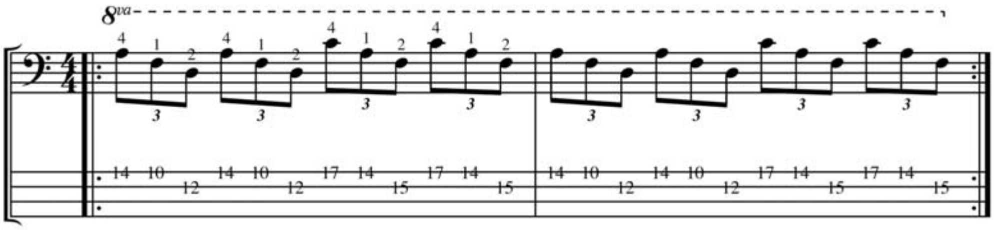
EXERCISE 1

Let's have a go at the easy bit first. To strum power chords like Stanley, hold your right hand in a fist with your thumb resting on the front pickup or even the end of the neck. Now stretch out your fingers, strumming downwards so that you rake across the strings. With your fretting hand, simply play root and 5th with your first and fourth fingers respectively, sliding the chord as you wish. The trick here is to dampen those strings not fretted. You stop the strings ringing with the palm of your right hand after each strum. Try this simple groove first.



EXERCISE 2

Before we look at some slap chops, try this triplet lick, which Clarke uses in most of his solos, changing the triad to suit the harmony. He'd normally play this at double tempo: see *exercise four*.



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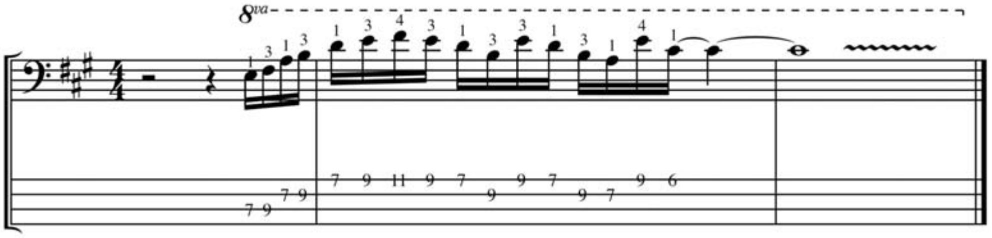
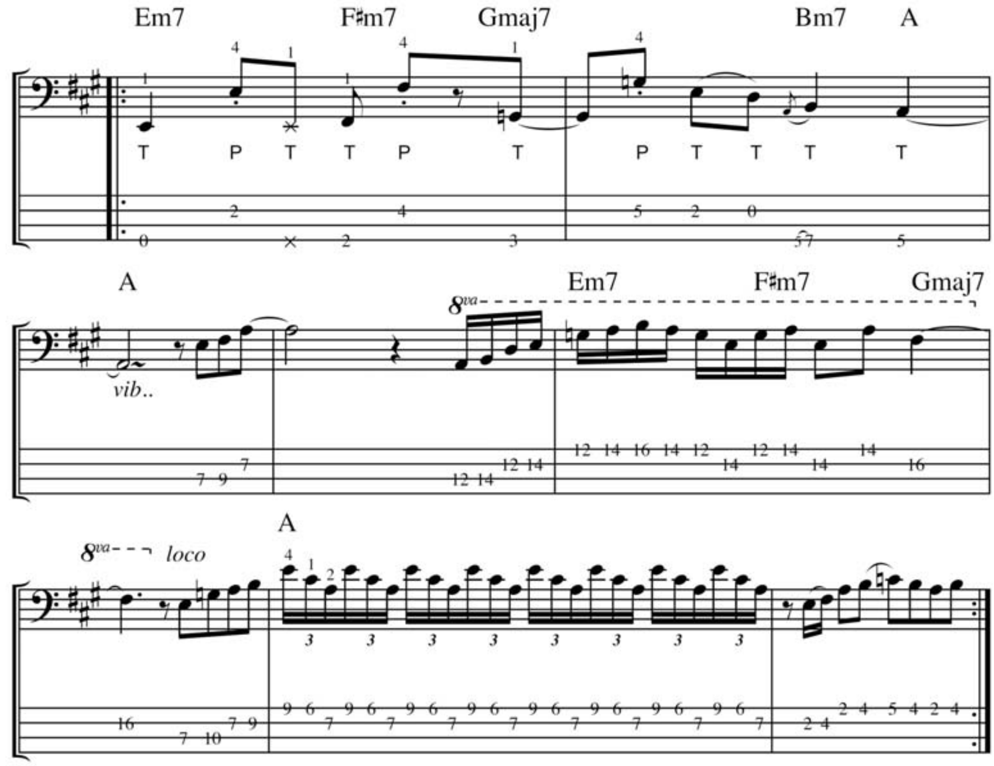
EXERCISE 3

One of Clarke's soloing trademarks is to play a fast flurry of notes followed by a long, held note, which he leaves to sustain for a beat or two before adding vibrato by bending the fretted string back and forth. Here's a typical example.



EXERCISE 4

There's nothing revolutionary about Clarke's slap playing, it's just that he always seems to play just what's required. Try this piece, based around the solo vamp in 'School Days'...



GEAR

Since the 70s Clarke has played Alembic basses almost exclusively, initially the small-bodied, short-scale series 1 and 2 basses and later his own signature model. All of his Alembics are wired in stereo, with the bridge and neck pickups having separate signal paths, for each to have different EQs.

Another long-term part of his bass setup comes from Ampeg. Clarke currently runs 1x15 and 4x10 Pro Neo cabs, with two SVT 2 PRO heads, although rather than the amps' own preamps he has two Alembic F-1X preamps, one each for HI and LO pass.

Clarke prefers foot pedal effects as opposed to rack-mount signal processors and generally uses a TC Electronic G System multi-FX unit, plus EBS Dynaverb, Bass IQ filter and Octave pedals. Although he's rarely played five-string basses, he's used both tenor basses (tuned A, D, G, C) and piccolo basses (tuned like a normal bass but an octave higher). Whichever bass he's using, his strings are usually DL HI-Beam custom lights. ■

ESSENTIAL TRACKS

'School Days', *School Days, Stanley Clarke* That distinctive root/five power-chord intro is truly iconic.

'Spain', *Light As A Feather, Return To Forever*
Early Chick Corea composition. This track demonstrates Clarke's superb sense of time in his role as a sideman.

'Lopsy Lu', *Stanley Clarke, Stanley Clarke*
Sound familiar? No doubt this track from Clarke's second album, released in 1974, was an influence on the Level 42 track 'Heathrow'. There's a great live version with Jeff Beck on guitar.

'Sweet Baby', *The Clarke/Duke Project Vol. 1, Stanley Clarke/George Duke*
Schmaltzy 80s pop song with a neat palm-muted bass-line and a Coral electric sitar solo by Clarke too.

'Bassically Taps', *If Only This Bass Could Talk, Stanley Clarke*
This track is a duet with Clarke's slapped bass accompanying tap dancer Gregory Hines.

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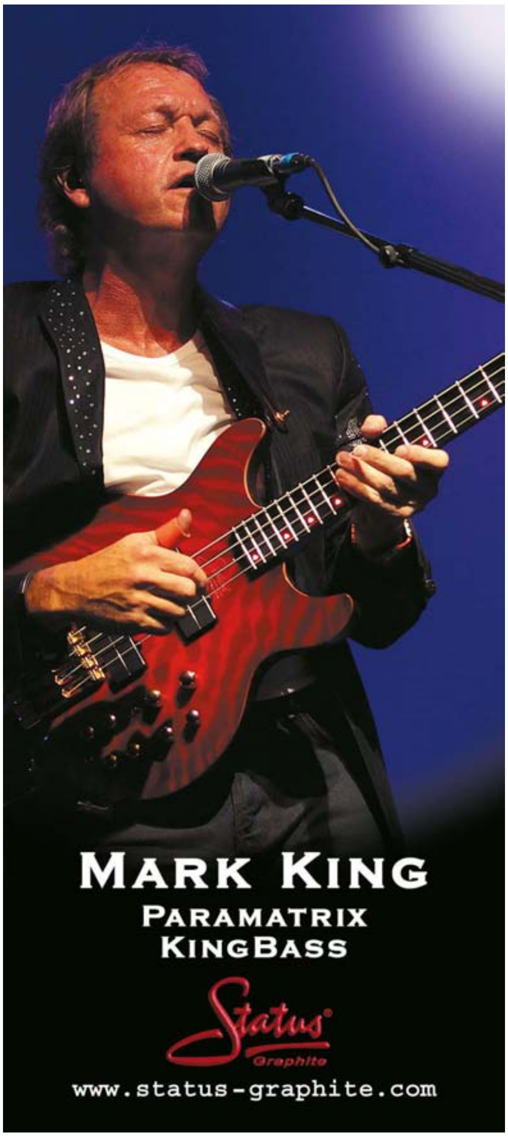

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